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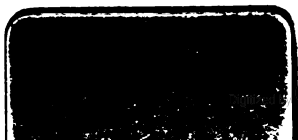
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LECTURES ON THE PHILIPPIANS.

LECTURES ON THE PHILIPPIANS.

EIGHTEEN LECTURES,

PRACTICAL AND EXPOSITORY,

UPON

ST. PAUL'S

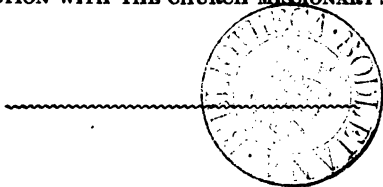
EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS,

BY THE

REV. J. S. S. ROBERTSON,

MISSIONARY IN BOMBAY,

IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY.



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NOTICE.

It seems due to the Author of these Lectures to say, that they have passed through the Press since he sailed from England for Bombay in November last, and consequently without the advantage of his superintendence. This will it is hoped form a sufficient ground for claiming the indulgence of the Reader for any slight expressions which might have been altered with advantage by the Author himself, but which, without his care and judgment, it was deemed better to allow to stand as they first came forth from his Pen.

LONDON,
May 1, 1849.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

LECTURE I.

p. 1.

Chap. I. Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons :

2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now ;

LECTURE II.

p. 19.

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ :

LECTURE III.

p. 43.

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

LECTURE IV.

p. 58.

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel :

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places ;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will.

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds :

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then ? notwithstanding, every way, whether in presence, or in truth, Christ is preached ; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

20 According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death,

LECTURE V. p. 72.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

LECTURE VI. p. 88.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour : yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better :

24 Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith :

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.

LECTURE VII. p. 103.

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ : that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel ;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries : which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake :

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

LECTURE VIII. p. 117.

Chap. II. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies ;

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

LECTURE IX.

p. 130.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus :

6 Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God :

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men :

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name,

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ;

11 And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

LECTURE X.

p. 145.

12 Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings, and disputings :

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world :

16 Holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

LECTURE XI.

p. 157.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus, to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state.

20 For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord, that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

LECTURE XII.

p. 171.

Chap. III. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

LECTURE XIII.

p. 183.

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead :

LECTURE XIV. p. 197.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect : but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

LECTURE XV. p. 210.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded : and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ :

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly : and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

20 For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ :

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

LECTURE XVI. p. 226.

Chap. IV. Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing : but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

LECTURE XVII. p. 240.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9 Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

LECTURE XVIII. p. 254.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein you were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

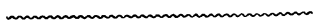
19 But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.



LECTURE I.

PHILIPPIANS I. 1—5.

Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons : grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

OF the introduction of the gospel among the people to whom this Epistle is addressed, we have an account in Acts xvi. 12, to the end. Paul and his fellow-travellers, Timothy and Luke, at a place "where prayer was wont to be made," had their first reception in the town of Philippi from a pious woman—probably a Jewish widow, who lived by the "selling of purple." Of the great things which were to be accomplished in that city, from so small beginnings, little expectation may have been entertained either by Paul or Lydia. The former, perhaps, may have had some confidence of success in his mission, in consequence of the vision which he saw before he left Asia, when "there stood a man of Macedonia before him, and said, Come over and help us."

B

As God had thus interposed to direct his way to that country, it was natural to conclude, that his visit thither was to end in something important.

The first Sabbath after the arrival of Paul and his fellow-travellers from Asia into this part of Europe was the time when Lydia constrained them to take up their lodgings with her. This was a day ever to be remembered by the inhabitants of Europe; as it was *then* that the heralds of the Gospel first appeared in that continent, to make known the wonderful things of God to a people, who, as they were then the most superstitious and the most dissolute, so they were afterwards to become, by believing Paul's message, the most enlightened and the most religious on the face of the earth. In reading the ancient records of events which have ended in great results, the mind of a thoughtful person finds pleasure in pausing to admire the hand of Providence, which persons who lived when those events happened could not trace, as they saw not what was to follow; and which careless readers of the present day pass slightly over, as points too unexciting to be worth noticing. The pious mind, however, finds a pleasure in reviewing every step in the progress of that glorious conquest which Christ makes over the kingdoms of this world.

The expulsion of the spirit of divination from the damsel that followed Paul and his companions was an important epoch in the moral history of the town of Philippi. Then was the oracle of Apollo put to silence by the powerful words of the men, who, as his priestess confessed, were "the servants of the Most High God, sent to declare unto the people the way of salvation."

The oracle, that day silenced, was to have its authority thenceforth diminished, day by day, until it should become famous in history merely as a thing that *once was*. This was the beginning of the fulfilment, to a great extent, of that ancient prophecy—"The idols ~~he~~ shall utterly abolish." When we think of the extent to which idol-worship was carried in ancient Greece and Rome, and the utter extinction of the ancient superstition a few centuries after the first preaching of the Gospel in those countries; can we repress the joyful hope, that the assaults now made on the kingdom of Satan in many heathen nations, shall also end in transferring the idols that are now worshipped, from the belief of a superstitious people, to the mythological chapters of a history one day to become ancient? If the prospects of this at present be not very bright, let us remember, for the support of our weak faith, that 1800 years ago there was as little reason to believe that three men, who had been scourged and cast into prison, on a charge of having disturbed the peace of a town enjoying the privileges of Roman citizens, were to set a-going a work in Europe, which in a few generations was to root out idolatry there *utterly and for ever*.

There is no reason to doubt that Paul and his companions would endeavour to make the most of their time at Philippi, during their stay there. The priestess of Apollo confessed, that they were the men who "declared the way of salvation;" and it is proper to infer from the bitterness of the masters of that damsel, that the newly-arrived missionaries must have attracted general notice from the inhabitants, and exercised great influence over them. The daily preachings of Paul and his

companions, in the markets and other places of public resort, seem to have been the occasions on which the Gospel of Christ was heard and believed by those persons to whom, about nine years afterwards, this Epistle was addressed.

The progress of the gospel under the ministration of Paul and his companions in Philippi being so great as to interfere with the worldly interests of those who lived by arts opposed to the doctrine of Christ, the interested persons took alarm, and made an appeal to the magistrates, in order that they might exert their influence in preventing it from spreading any further among the people. Vain and powerless was their interference, as all attempts will ever prove, that are directed against the work of God. The very gaoler appointed to secure "them in the inner prison, by making their feet fast in the stocks," is himself converted, and led by the operation of the Holy Spirit to cry out—"What must I do to be saved?" To which important question he soon received that answer which was destined to be a never-failing source of comfort to penitent sinners until the end of time—"Believe," said the Divine Messenger, "*in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" The offer of mercy was immediately accepted by the gaoler and his family; and that same hour of midnight was their faith sealed by the holy ordinance of Baptism. We may suppose that this gaoler's conversion was the cause of much excitement among his fellow-citizens. He would not be inclined to hide his light under a bushel: the Gospel which he found precious he would not fail to commend to the attention of others. And the extraordinary

change in his religion would draw many to him, to inquire into the cause of such a remarkable occurrence; and thus give him an opportunity of telling to some perishing sinners what the Living God had done for his soul—and was ready, if they were willing, to do also for theirs.

Before Paul and his companions leave Philippi on a journey into the interior of Macedonia, they must see the magistrates, to whom no doubt—although we are not expressly told—Paul declared the Gospel of Christ, as an important part of the quarrel then pending between Paul and his companions, on the one side, and the Philippian magistrates and other citizens, on the other. Thus were these servants of Christ, according to the prophecy of their Divine Master, “brought before rulers,” to afford them an opportunity of making a “testimony” of “the Gospel of the Grace of God,” of making a testimony which otherwise might never have been made.

Such were the circumstances connected with the formation of the Church at Philippi, to which, “with its bishops and deacons,” this epistle was written by St. Paul when a prisoner at Rome, waiting to be brought before Nero. These circumstances we have carefully traced, in order that we might have a clear view of the conversion of a people, whose virtues and piety are often commended in this epistle, which, if it please God, shall furnish us with a series of Lectures.

We shall now come to the particular consideration of the verses which we have read; and may the Holy Spirit enable us, in our progress, to learn those lessons which

may produce in us as many Christian virtues as the Apostle found to commend among the Philippians!

Observe, that Paul in the title of the Epistle couples the name of Timothy with his own. There must surely have been something peculiarly excellent in that young man, which rendered him the familiar friend of one like St. Paul, so much his superior in age, so distinguished for his wisdom and piety, and so untiring and zealous in the service of his Master. It is a sure sign of a young man's merit, when he is chosen as the intimate friend of the aged and the good. Such a youth is sure to rise to eminence among men: whereas those, who spend their best days among the foolish pursuits of giddy companions, shall assuredly come to nothing.

It may be, that Timothy had endeared himself to the converts at Philippi, by the excellence of his character as a minister of the gospel; and so a letter coming with his name prefixed, as well as that of Paul, would be doubly acceptable to them.

The converts at Philippi are styled "*saints*." In the primitive times all were so called, who had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and were seeking to live according to His commandments. The term *saint* was afterwards very wrongly applied. In the dark ages of Roman superstition, the name of *saint* began to be appropriated to a very unscriptural sort of character.—It was falsely given to him who might render himself the object of vulgar admiration by cruel self-mortifications, and self-inflicted tortures, which he foolishly and presumptuously supposed would procure him favour with God, and the pardon not only of all his own sins, but also of those who were not able like him to live contrary to the

manner in which God has ordained that men should live. Such a "saint," as the one most esteemed in those dark ages, was the very opposite of the character delineated in the Gospels and Epistles.

1. St. James says, "*Pure religion* and undefiled before God and the Father is this, *To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*" Here there is no command to go out of society in order to cultivate "pure religion;" but on the contrary it appears necessary to the very existence of "pure religion," that it daily perform those offices which *can* be performed *only in social life*, left as nature dictates.—2. From the view given in Matthew xxv. of what shall take place at the day of judgment, we learn that it is necessary to live *in* the world, and not to retire *from* it—in order to have any opportunity of doing works of charity; as it is clear that *these* alone will be received at the solemn day, as evidence of connection with the adorable Judge.—3. Again, St. Paul says (Rom. xii.) "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; . . . *not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*" Here it is clear that even the fervour of devotion is consistent with attention to business.—4. So far is the New Testament from encouraging mere meditative devotion, that it cautions against it as likely to interfere with the happiness and good order of society. "We hear," saith St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "*that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own*

bread." We learn indeed from the New Testament, that it is necessary for a certain order of men to forsake worldly business ; but it is to "give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word"—not to prayer *alone*, not to shut themselves up in cloisters, and enjoy in solitude the spiritual luxury of heavenly meditation,—but to *prayer* together with *labour* for the enlightenment of those who are in darkness. It might perhaps be easy to be holy in heart and in life, if one were away from the sight of all the alluring charms of this world, which exert such a powerful influence on the minds of all, even the best of men. But that must always be esteemed the most genuine godliness, which has stood the test of numberless trials ; even as that man only should be called *valiant* who has defended his country against its boldest enemies, by going into the field of battle, with the resolution either to conquer or lose his life in the conflict.

The literal meaning of the word "*saint*" is a *sanctified person*, a man or woman *made holy*. All men are by nature *unholy*, enemies to God in their minds and by wicked works. Therefore, without a change taking place in his soul, no man can be saved. This change is so great, that Holy Scripture represents it as a *new creation*, or being "*born again*." To this our Blessed Lord refers, in his conversation with Nicodemus, saying, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Now this being "*born again*" is as necessary to us, who have been baptized in our infancy, as it is to the pagans in heathen nations, or was to the Philippians, when Paul first preached to them. Therefore let none of us deceive ourselves "*with a name to*

live," while it may be we "*are dead*." If all our religion consist in a formal and perfunctory attendance upon outward ordinances—however devout we may appear to be—let us be assured we are not yet God's people. To such He speaks by the prophet—"Who hath required this at your hands, to tread My courts?" We can please God only by casting ourselves on His mercy, as it is displayed in the gift of His Son. Our own righteousness we must renounce, as not worthy of trusting to; and our hopes must be founded on the glorious and infinite merits of "*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*."

However, we are not to suppose, that because the godly man is made a "*saint*" only by faith in Christ, he is therefore careless of his moral conduct. Far from it. The very object of a sinner's pardon is, to make him the child of God, "*zealous*" of every "*good work*." There is no man more fearful to offend against God's holy laws than he who is most fully persuaded, that he is justified before God only "*by faith in Christ Jesus*." Faith cannot exist without producing such a love to Jesus, the Blessed Author of our salvation, as enables the believer to delight in doing the will of God, and in "*following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*."

Thus, then, he is a "*saint*," who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and has been enabled by the influence of the Holy Spirit to live a *holy* and pious life, striving with all his might to be pleasing to God, and useful to his fellow-man. The saints at Philippi St. Paul addresses "*as in Christ Jesus*." This expression intimates some very close union between Christ and his people. Christians are united to Christ by a most strict

relationship. They can never be separated from Him. They have fellowship with Him in all the parts of His mediatorial office. If He is a *King*, they are His subjects ; if He is a *Prophet*, they are the persons whom He instructs ; if He is a *Priest*, they are those whom He hath perfected by His sacrifice "once offered." Because He lives, they shall live also ; because He rose from the dead, all their bodies also shall rise ; because He is at the right hand of God, they also shall have an eternal mansion there ; because He passed through all His trials below safely into rest, they also shall "*be more than conquerors* through Him that loved them."

Mention is made in our text of persons called "bishops and deacons." It is natural for the English reader to inquire, how it came about that there was more than *one bishop* in one town ? We reply, that the word translated *bishop* in the New Testament does not mean, as it does now among us, the highest minister in the Church. It is used rather as synonymous with *presbyter*. Lest this should be deemed a *rash* concession to the opponents of Episcopacy, I must produce the proofs of my assertion. A system founded on Scripture can never suffer by being carefully compared with Scripture. 1. In Acts xx. 17, we read, "From Miletus Paul sent and called the *elders* of the Church." In v. 28. addressing the same *elders*, he says, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*." To make this proof obvious, it is necessary to observe, that the word *elders* in the former verse, and *overseers* in the latter, are in Greek respectively "*presbyters*" and "*bishops*." 2. In 1 Peter v. 1, 2, we read, "The *elders* which are among

you I exhort, who am also an elder.....Feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight* thereof, not by constraint, but willingly." Here again, the word *elders* is in Greek *presbyters*, and such persons are exhorted to *take the oversight*; i. e. in Greek, to *become the bishops* of the flock. 3. St. Paul says to Titus, (i. 5,) "I left thee in Crete, to ordain *elders* [or *presbyters*] in every city. as I had appointed thee...If any be blameless, &c. For a *bishop* must be blameless." 4. The qualifications which St. Paul mentions to Titus, as necessary in the candidate for the office of *presbyter*, or *bishop*, he also repeats to Timothy. 5. In the epistles to Timothy and Titus there are full directions given for the choosing of *bishops* and *deacons*, but none for the choosing of *presbyters*. At the same time frequent mention is made, in the epistles to Timothy, of the *elders*, or *presbyters*. Now, as St. Paul wrote his epistles to Timothy in order to guide him as to "how he should behave in the house of God," would it not be expected that he would give him *full directions*, which in this case has not been done, unless we believe, what we think must now be very clear, that *bishops* and *presbyters* mean in his language the same persons?

Suppose now any one were to say, Is it not then obvious that they are right who contend for parity or equality among the ministers of Christ? What would be the reply? It would be as follows:—In the time of the Apostles, the words which we translate *elder* and *bishop* had not yet acquired the technical meaning which was assigned to them in the following generation. The *elders* or *presbyters* sometimes meant elderly brethren in the Church, and sometimes persons of *gravity* either

by age or character, who were called to the office next to the apostles in the Church. The elders being entrusted to the oversight or care of the Church, were called *bishops* or *overseers*. The apostles themselves during their life-time were the *overseers* of the *elders* or *presbyters*. After the death of the Apostles it was necessary to appoint some of the most trust-worthy of the presbyters, to exercise over their brethren the office which by death the Apostles had vacated. So it was not till after the death of the apostles that the name *overseer*, or bishop, ceased to be applied to those who were merely over the laity, and became restricted to those who watched over both the laity, and the presbyters and deacons. Vain then is it to search for proof in the New Testament, to show that there were bishops, priests, and deacons in the apostolical Church. As the phraseology was not required till after the death of the Apostles who were the authors of the New Testament,—it is not *there*, but in the subsequent writings of the Church, that we must expect to find it. It is proper, however, to observe, that even before the death of the Apostles we have in the New Testament instances of men in dignity below the Apostles, being intrusted with authority over presbyters and deacons. Timothy, for instance, was left by St. Paul at Ephesus, in order to guard the teachers there from false doctrine ; to ordain elders or bishops, and to try the characters of those who wished to be admitted to the ministry ; to establish order in public worship ; to regulate the distribution of alms to the poor ; and, what is very material to be noticed, to receive accusations, or to sit in judgment on an elder or presbyter, provided such accusation were made good by

the competent number of witnesses. In fact, Timothy was entrusted by St. Paul with such work as is now peculiar to the order of bishops in our Church—and which among presbyterians would not be permitted to one man, but to a synod or assembly of ministers. But this is sufficient on this subject.

After the title or address of the epistle in the 1st verse, Paul gives us in the 2nd his usual blessing:—*“ Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”* It has always been the custom for pious people to testify their affection for their friends by asking the blessing of God upon them, and we must allow that this is a very commendable practice. The blessing of a minister of God, however, when his character agrees to the dignity of his profession (James v. 16,) is to be looked upon as something more than that of one friend pronounced upon another. It appears plainly from several passages of Scripture, that the blessing of a minister of God is equivalent to that of God Himself. It is indeed the only way in which God condescends to bless His people—I mean the only way in which God testifies by words His good will and love to His people while on earth. Accordingly, although by the Romanists the sacerdotal blessing has been accompanied with gross abuses, all Protestant communities, which still hold fast by the Gospel of Christ, do continue to look upon the blessing of the people by the minister, in the name of the Blessed Trinity, as an essential part of public worship.

In modern days, it is true, the blessing of a minister of God is generally very little cared for. But in ancient times, and even more recently in this Island since the

Reformation, the pious believers in Christ had full confidence in the virtue of that which, however lightly it might be esteemed by men, was yet an appointment of unerring Wisdom. We are now-a-days so much tossed and driven about from one extreme of error to another, that we are in danger of losing hold of real Scriptural truth. There is reason to fear that the disposition to cry out against all forms and ceremonies in religion, no matter whether founded in Scripture or not, has in these days affected even persons who in most respects would wish to have themselves viewed as devoted members of a well-organized Church. While we would repudiate with abhorrence the teaching of those, who make the salvation of the soul depend upon the attendance to outward ceremonies ; we yet consider as equally unscriptural the opinion of those, who would call all the ordinances of Christ non-essentials, and so pass them by altogether, or else attend to them without any faith in their efficacy, as they would attend to an act of secular business. From this latter sort of persons we fear great evil may arise to the Christian religion. The transition is not very abrupt, from the treating with indifference the outward acts of religion, to the setting aside the thing altogether, as a matter of mere metaphysical speculation, in which the mind of man might enjoy the utmost liberty to inquire, and to argue, and to build systems, which gain admirers among men simply because they are of "man's device." It was an excessive aversion to ceremonies that produced most of the infidelity that prevailed in Great Britain in the days of Charles II. and those of his unhappy successor ; and to this same cause is to be traced the great prevalence

of Socinianism and Deism in Germany and the United States of America at the present day. With these awful examples before our eyes, brethren, you will agree with me in thinking that our safest course, in order to steer clear of all extremes, is to adhere to the Bible; and to believe that, although we are *not saved* by attendance on religious ceremonies, yet we have ground to be assured that it would be unsafe to despise, or even neglect them. "He," saith the Saviour, "that breaketh the *least* of these my commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be called *least* in the Kingdom of God." If the Lord Jesus Christ Himself considered it becoming to "fulfil all righteousness," does it become those who call themselves His followers to consider themselves discharged from such observances? Assuredly not. So much for the propriety of a minister's giving God's blessing on the people.

But what is the substance of the *blessing* itself? It is—"Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." By *grace* is denoted the favour and love of God experimentally enjoyed by the believer,—the light of God's countenance beaming upon the soul of him who has been enabled, by the Spirit of adoption, to address Him as His "Father in heaven." By *peace* is meant the calm produced in the soul by the belief that the Most High is our friend and protector; that God has forgiven us all our trespasses, and become our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. *Peace* in the soul implies the absence of all anxiety as to the happiness of our future condition,—the assured, but humble hope, that there is "laid up for us a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

It is very observable, that St. Paul in this, as well as in many other places, mentions the Lord Jesus Christ as associated with the Father in the bestowment of the greatest spiritual blessings. How is such an association subversive of that palpable *heresy*, which would bring down the adorable Saviour from His Divine Dignity to the level of common sinful man! May we be all guarded from such an erroneous opinion! When we once leave the safe path of truth pointed out in the Divine Word, it is difficult to tell to what degree of error we may be carried; therefore let us remember the old proverb, "Resist the beginnings of evil." We know that we shall be safe so long as we stand on Scriptural ground; but when we advance into the wilderness of man's vain imaginations, dangers may surround us on every side.

Mark in *vv.* 3 and 4, the great care of St. Paul for the Church at Philippi. "*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.*" This is in accordance with his affectionate solicitude for all the other churches which he had founded. The apostle was never happier than when he heard of the divine progress of those whom he had been the instrument of bringing out of heathen darkness to the glorious light of the Gospel. Oh! that all the ministers of Christ now were as he! Would they were as faithful, as earnest, as devoted, as disinterested! It would also be a blessed state of things, if faithful ministers of Christ had always reason to "*give thanks with joy, whenever they remembered their people in their prayers.*" Does it not too often happen, that the minister of Christ must now

weep rather than *rejoice*, when he prays for the people of his charge? Do not ministers see many of their flock living more after the manner of worldly men, than like those faithful *saints* whose consistent and holy lives caused joy to the heart of the devoted apostle? May God once more refresh his barren church with the sight of a pious people devoted with all the affection of their hearts to a minister, who, by disinterested, untiring labours for their spiritual good, shall prove himself worthy of their love and esteem!

The cause of the apostle's joy is specified in the 5th verse, to be "*for their fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now.*" "Fellowship in the Gospel" means (1) participation in the blessings of the Gospel; (2) the union of Christians in a corporate capacity, in order to realize all those blessings; and (3) the co-operation of Christians, in order to promote that Gospel among others. Perhaps it is in this latter sense that we are to understand the words of our text. The apostle in subsequent parts of the epistle commends the kindness of the Philippians in lending him their aid, while labouring for the extension of the Gospel in other parts. When the heart of a Christian is warmed with the love of Christ, he is easily led to enter with zeal into all the efforts in which his brethren are engaged, for the benefitting of those who are yet unblest with the knowledge of salvation through Christ crucified.

We have now finished our observations on the verses read as the foundation for this morning's lecture. May we all reverently attend to the doctrines which have now been presented to us, so far as they have been accordant with the oracles of Truth! May we seek to

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be adorned with all the virtues which characterize the *saints* of God ;—may “ grace and peace ” be experienced by us all ; may we have joy when we “ remember ” each other “ in our prayers ” at the throne of mercy ; and may we all be bound affectionately together in “ the fellowship of the Gospel ! ”

LECTURE II.

PHILIPPIANS I. 6.

Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

THIS verse is in connexion with what goes before. It expresses one of the reasons which the Apostle had for the joy mentioned in the 4th verse. One cause of the Apostle's joy was, that the Philippians had become partakers of the Gospel and sharers with him in the efforts to extend the knowledge thereof among the ignorant. And the other cause of the Apostle's joy was, the delightful persuasion that the Philippians would continue to go on in the good course on which they had been led to enter. The Philippians had been converted from the sins of their former life : this indeed was to them a great good, and to Paul their friend a source of joy ; but the value of their conversion is considerably modified by the manner in which the question is to be answered, Is this conversion permanent in its effects ? This is a world of change, and man is liable to be interfered with by a thousand influences. Is there then any reason whatever to rejoice that a man is doing well in the present time, when to-morrow perhaps he will be turned

to evil? If man's continuance in well-doing depended upon his own power, these questions should receive an unfavourable reply. But he who has been turned from the evil of his ways is under the protection and control of Him, "with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." Those for whose benefit the Almighty interposes are made partakers to a certain degree of His own nature.

The doctrine maintained in this verse is a very important one. It is generally known among theologians by the name of "*the perseverance of the saints*." Before proceeding to state the grounds of this doctrine, let us attend to one or two inquiries in regard to the phraseology of the text.

1. What is meant by the word *confident*? It does not appear necessary to understand this word in its modern sense, of *being absolutely certain*. Unless Paul had been gifted either with the attribute of seeing the hearts of his fellow-creatures, or of foreknowledge, it was certainly out of his power to affirm that every one of the members of the Philippian Church was to continue stedfast in the faith until the day of Jesus Christ. We must therefore understand the word as merely synonymous with "*being persuaded*." It may be that there is a certain condition tacitly implied. "He that hath begun a good work will continue the same, *i. e.* provided the work has been begun—which I am fully persuaded it has,—then doubtless that work shall be brought to its completion."

2. What is the "*good work*" mentioned in the text? A late German critic has represented it as the charitable work of sending pecuniary relief to St. Paul

when a prisoner in Rome. But it is difficult to see in what sense such a work was to go on until the day of Jesus Christ. It is much easier to make sense of the passage, by supposing that the "good work" was the work of their conversion. This word is frequently found in such a sense in New Testament. (St. John, vi. 28, 29.) The Jews asked our Lord, "What shall we do, that we might *work the works* of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is *the work* of God, that ye *believe on him whom he hath sent*." The believing of the Gospel is the work of God in two senses—1. It is the work which God enjoins; and 2. It is the work which He Himself performs. In 1 Cor. iii. 9, St. Paul represents himself as a labourer together with God, and the Corinthians as the husbandry or tillage on which he was employed. The conversion of the Corinthians by St. Paul is evidently the work to which allusion is made in subsequent verses of the same chapter. In 1 Cor ix. 1, 2, we read, "*Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*" The work of preaching the Gospel for the conversion of men is called, in Acts, xv. 38, "*the work,*" by way of eminence, as if that were the most important of all works. According to the same phraseology, St. Paul says of Timothy "He *worketh the work of the Lord*, as I also do," (1 Cor. xvi. 10.) and elsewhere calls him his "*work-fellow.*" (Rom. xvi. 21.) There is no passage, however, which throws greater light on the expression in our text than the words in II. 12, 13, of this same epistle—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for

it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Here the salvation of man is represented as a *work* originated and carried on by God Himself. Man indeed is viewed as engaging in it too—but he is represented as taking part in it only after God hath set it a-going. It is safe for us then to conclude, that the good work mentioned in the text is the work of conversion. It may be called a *work*, because it is something done in us by God; and it may be called a *good* work, because the end and consequence of it in us will be our everlasting good: besides, it may be called a good work, because the period of conversion is the beginning of a life of *goodness* and holiness.

3. Let us inquire what is meant by *the day of Jesus Christ*. It has been said, with good reason, that the second coming of our Lord was expected even by the Apostles to take place before the death of the generation in whose days He ascended into heaven. The time of our Lord's second coming has been purposely left uncertain; in order that all might be watchful, and ready for so great and so momentous an event. No wonder then that even in the apostolic writings we find expressions, such as that in our text, which would lead the Churches to whom they wrote to suppose it likely that our Lord was to come even in their own life-time. The most remarkable of such expressions is found in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15—17; "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that *we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord* shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in

Christ shall rise first; *then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" If then they in the Apostle's days expected "the day of Jesus Christ" to happen before their own death, then the expression "the day of Jesus Christ" is to be taken as for substance the same as the day of each one's death, when, in case he is a Christian, he has done with all the struggles of sin, is beyond the reach of every anxiety, and brought into the glorified presence of his Divine Lord. It will appear to any attentive reader of the New Testament that the expressions "the day of Jesus Christ," "the day of the Lord," "the day of Christ," and "the coming of the Lord" all mean the same thing, viz. the second coming of Christ. Now when any work, as in the text, is represented as continuing or going on until that day, we must place ourselves in the circumstances of the people who lived in the days of the apostle, and thus we shall understand such an expression as denoting that that work is to go on "*as long as we shall have any connection with the present world.*" This seems a better way of understanding the language of the Apostle than that suggested by Calvin in the following quotation: "*As the Spirit in the Scriptures usually directs our attention to the last coming of Christ, it may be better to consider the progress of Divine grace as extending to the resurrection of the body. Although those who are freed from the mortal body no longer war with the lusts of the flesh, and are, as it may be said, beyond the reach of the dart, yet there is nothing improper in considering them as in a state of progress. They have*

not yet reached the ultimate object of their desires ; they are not in possession of the felicity and glory to which they look forward ; the day has not yet dawned, which shall reveal the hidden treasures for which they hope. So long, therefore, as there is place for the exercise of hope, it is proper always to have our eyes directed, as to a fixed point, to a blessed resurrection."

The great and insuperable objection to this theory of Calvin's is, that it has no countenance whatever from Scripture. Nay, some things are said in Scripture which seem plainly to contradict it, and to teach the doctrine that immediately after death the soul of the believer is admitted to the enjoyment of perfect bliss ; and as that bliss is certainly not diminished, so neither have we any reason to believe that it will be increased until the day of the resurrection, when all the consequences of sin, so far as the redeemed are concerned, shall be for ever done away.

Let us now proceed to examine the doctrine of our text ; and I have no doubt we shall see that it is clearly taught in numerous other passages of Scripture.

If the doctrine of our text were not true—if it were not true that all those who have truly repented of their sins, and turned from them unto the service of God, do really go on in the good way on which they have entered until they arrive at the world of glory—then how unmeaning and inapposite will all those Scriptural expressions seem, that refer to the conversion of a sinner. In the Gospels our Lord assures us, "*that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.*" St. James tells us, "*that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.*" Now it

must be clear, that the repentance and conversion here mentioned must be something different from the transient remorse which almost every man experiences, after doing an action which his conscience disapproves. For there would be no cause for joy to the angels in heaven in regard to that sorrow for a bad action committed to-day, which was to be followed to-morrow by a fresh instance of transgression. And if the turning of the sinner from the error of his way was to be followed by an immediate relapse into error, then it would be clear that no soul was saved from death. If we would see the full force of this Scriptural language, we must believe that there is some striking difference between the temporary remorse of him who continues an unbeliever, and that "*godly sorrow*" of the Christian "*which worketh repentance not to be repented of.*" The one is momentary, and a mere feeling ; the other is permanent, and becomes a principle which acts and operates in the Christian during all his future life. In the latter case, we can easily conceive that there is ground for joy to the angels in heaven ; in the former, we can see none. And if conversion be not enduring in its effects, then we cannot see how the Apostle James could venture to comfort the Christians to whom he wrote, by telling them "*that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way saved a soul from death.*"

In corroboration of the doctrine of our text, I would call your attention to the nature of the phraseology by which Holy Scripture expresses the conversion of a sinner to God. In Coloss. i. 13, we read, "*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.*" To

the Ephesians (II. 12, 13) St. Paul says "*Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world : but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" When our Lord appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus, He told him that He gave him a commission to go to the "*Gentiles,to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*" (Acts xxvi. 18.) St. Peter saith (1 Ep. ii. 9, 10) "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light : which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God ; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*" Certainly no language could possibly be more definite than this, to show the entire and radical difference between one who has been, and one who has not been converted. Now if, after all, the effects of conversion be not permanent and abiding, wherein consists the great difference of a man's condition before and after conversion ? If one may go back again to the Kingdom of Satan, after he has been translated into that of God's dear Son ; if one may again go far off, who has been brought nigh by the blood of Christ ; if one, who has had his eyes opened, and been turned from darkness to light, and from Satan unto God, may again have his eyes shut, again fall back into darkness, and from God to the power of the wicked one ; if they, who from being no people have become the people of God, and

who, from a state wherein there was no mercy, have been raised to one in which they obtain mercy;—if they can ever fall from these privileges, then may we not ask, whether the Sacred writers have not used such language as could not fail to mislead the reader? The only possible way of justifying the use of such language is, to assert that the Apostles really believed, that when once a man is converted to God he is introduced to a state of safety, from which, notwithstanding the remains of human frailty, he should never after be suffered to fall away. Now what the Apostles believed, we also must hold—because they believed and taught, whether by word or epistle, only what they themselves had learned either from the lips of their Divine Master when on earth, or else from the teaching of the Holy Ghost after the day of Pentecost.

There are yet certain other passages of Scripture to which I have not alluded, which certainly could not have been written by any one that did not believe the doctrine in our text. (2 Cor. v. 17.) “*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new.*” (Rom. viii. 14—16.) “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*” (Romans vi. 11.) “*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Now it may be asked, Can one who has been so changed as to become a new creature, ever again be as if no such change had

taken place? Can one, of whom the Spirit hath witnessed that he is a child of God, ever again be cast out of God's family? Can one, who has been raised from the death of sin, and made alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, ever again lose the life to which he hath been quickened? If so, what meaneth the rejoicing of the Apostle, where he exclaims—“ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

It is, brethren, no presumption, it is no unwarranted confidence, to believe, and to rejoice in believing, that in case ye have really forsaken the service of the world, and become the servants of Christ, every anxiety about your future conduct and condition may be laid aside. Then ye may be as sure of your ultimate happiness, as if ye already were in heaven; then ye may be as sure that ye will continue to run the Christian race, as if ye had already come to the end of it; then ye may be as sure that ye shall gain the victory over all your enemies, as if ye already saw them all subdued at your feet; then ye may be as certain of receiving the crown of life, as if ye already saw the Judge taking it in his hands to put it on your head. Now this joyful confidence is not granted to the believer in vain. It is afforded for the purpose of producing in him love and

adoration for the Great Author of such a favour. Henceforth his whole life is to be regulated by a feeling of gratitude. He feels that he can never make any thing like an adequate return for such an unspeakable mercy. He is enlisted into the service of Christ, and for ever entirely devoted to it; because his interests, both now and throughout eternity, are inseparably linked together with those of Christ. Christ's will is his will,—Christ's friends are his friends,—Christ's enemies are his enemies. O how cold in comparison of what it is would be the Christian's love to Christ, if he had not the gracious assurance vouchsafed, that his faith in, his service of, and love to, his Blessed Saviour shall by no means be passed by, but receive their full reward! Thus the believer is called, not to the service of a slave, who does not know whether what he does shall be approved by his master, but to the obedience of a son, all whose doings shall be found praiseworthy by a father that loves him.

I must guard what I have said from being misunderstood. I have maintained that there is not the slightest doubt of salvation to one who has been converted. This assertion, however, is not inconsistent with the fact, that it is possible for one to take comfort from the doctrine of our text, who is not in any way entitled to it. For although there be no doubt—although Scripture explicitly declares, that they who really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall certainly be saved—yet there may be doubt concerning a particular person, whether he has believed or not. Many have imposed upon themselves, and upon others, with a profession of love to Christ, when they had nothing of the kind; they believed

themselves penitent, while they yet loved sin; they fancied they were engaged in the service of God, while they were yet under bondage to Mammon. Such persons had a fair appearance for a time, but in time of temptation they fell away, *i. e.* they lapsed into the conduct and habits which were natural to them, as they had not in them that new life and spirit which overcometh the world, and subdues the whole man to the obedience of the Gospel.

It will easily be inferred from what has been said, that the question to be determined by every one, in order to his personal comfort, is, not whether they that have been converted to God can ever fall away from a state of grace, (for this, Scripture answers in the negative,) but rather whether he himself hath really been converted or not. So long as there is a question entertained by any individual upon this point, the doctrine of our text can be of no use to him; because he will see, that however much reason a converted man may have to rejoice at the contemplation of his future condition, for his part he cannot share in this joy, because he is not yet certain that he is a converted man. When the matter is thus presented, the doctrine which we have stated, and which by many is viewed as a dangerous one, is perfectly guarded from all abuse, and therefore no one, however tender in conscience, or fearful of man's natural presumption, needs to take alarm at it. No cause for security and carelessness is given by this doctrine, while it is clearly stated that the only way by which any one can prove that it bears upon himself, is first to give clear evidence of his conversion from sin to

God, and to prove, by a holy life and conversation, that he has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps it may now be objected, "What can be the benefit of the doctrine of the text, if one cannot be persuaded of himself that he is one of those to whom it applies?" We answer, it would indeed be in that case without benefit. But we think there is reason to believe from Scripture, that those who believe are gifted with the knowledge of their real state before God. The Apostle St. Peter says, "Make your calling and election sure," which according to him is done by showing oneself adorned with all the graces of the Christian character, and abundantly bringing forth the fruits of faith. He speaks of those who, with a Christian profession, do not thus live, as persons "*blind, and that cannot see afar off, and who have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins.*" From this then it is a fair deduction, that those who *do* live according to their Christian profession, do indeed remember and know that they are washed from their former sins. The language of St. John, to prove the point in question, is very forcible. He saith (1 Ep. ii. 3.) "*Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*" (iii. 14.) "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*" (iii. 24.) "*Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*" (v. 13.) "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*" These texts all show that it is possible for a Christian to know his real state

before God, to be sure that he really is a child of God, and so entitled to divine comfort from the doctrine of our text.

While however we admit that it is the privilege of God's people to know that they really are His children, and that as such their eternal state of salvation is sure from the moment of their conversion,—yet we must maintain, that many who really are the children of God fall short of this privilege. We cannot agree with those who hold that no man can be a believer at all, unless he is certain in his own mind that he is a believer; and we think it necessary to bear in mind, that to believe that Jesus Christ is an Almighty Saviour, and to believe that I am myself interested in His salvation, are two things totally different—so different, that the one may be, and often is, where the other is not. It is true that every one who believes that Jesus Christ *is* a Saviour, ought to trust in him as his own Saviour; but either from a habit of sin which one allows himself to fall into, or from ignorance of the nature of the Gospel, or from inadequate views of Scriptural doctrine, this personal trust in the Saviour is not always realized. When the Apostle St. Peter, in the passage already quoted, says “make your calling and election sure,” and when St. John says, in a passage also already quoted, “I write these things, that ye may know that ye have eternal life,” we must in either case suppose, that their spiritual state was secure, even before the persons themselves were assured of it. It does therefore seem to us that they act harshly and uncharitably, who refuse to consider those as Christians, who cannot as yet speak with

certainty as to their personal connexion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be expected of me to take some notice of such passages in the New Testament as seem to teach a doctrine contrary to that which we have found in our text. I will therefore notice and remark upon the most important of these passages.

(a.) 1 Cor. ix. 27. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Reply. The cause of difficulty in this passage lies in the wrong sense attached to the word '*a cast-away.*' This does not mean one given over to perdition. It merely signifies one who has been deemed unfit for the office for which he has offered himself as a candidate. The apostle is speaking of the diligence which he used, in order that he might be found a worthy and approved minister of Jesus Christ. Now, he might have failed in this object, and yet not come short of his own salvation. The Apostle never had any doubt about this. Wherever he mentions the subject, he speaks with the utmost confidence; e. g. Phil. i. 21. 23. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 18.

(b.) Gal. v. 4. "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace."

Reply. The grace here mentioned is not, as usual, the favour with which God regards his people; but rather the doctrine of salvation *by grace*, without the deeds of the law. It is in fact an elliptical expression, the meaning of the apostle clearly being,—“If any of you receive the doctrine of justification by the works of the law, ye

are fallen from the true doctrine of the gospel which ye first received, viz. that salvation is entirely *by grace.*"

(c.) 1 *Tim.* i. 19. "Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." By "faith" here, we are to understand merely "the *profession* of faith," which may easily be supposed to be capable of shipwreck, while faith itself never can; for it is written "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." (St. John, iii. 36.) And again, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (v. 24.)

(d.) *Heb.* iv. 1, 2. "Let us therefore *fear*, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, *any of you should seem to come short of it.*" For as the Gospel is preached unto us, so was it also unto them, "but the word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in them that heard it." Here it is clear that only those need fear a coming-short of God's eternal rest, who fail, after the example of the Israelites, to exercise faith in the word preached. To them who have faith, there is no occasion for fear.

(e.) *Heb.* vi. 4—6. 1. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come (miraculous powers, possessed by the first ministers of *the Gospel dispensation*, known by the Jewish teachers as *the world to come*,) *if they shall fall away*, to renew them again

unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

(2.) *Heb. x. 10—29.* "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, *who hath trodden under foot the son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified*, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?"

(3.) *2 Peter, ii. 20—22.* "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb,—The dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Nothing stronger than these last three passages has ever been alleged in opposition to the doctrine of our text. But what is it that they prove ? Merely—

1. That there is such a thing as apostasy from the Christian religion.

2. That the condition of apostates is a very fearful one, as being one from which they are not likely to be rescued.

3. That apostates, before their apostasy, were in the enjoyment of very distinguished privileges. Now, it is not certain that any of those privileges is so high as necessarily to imply conversion to God, and faith in Christ. All that they apostatized from was the profession of that, which they had never really experienced. The symbolical things enumerated by St. Paul do certainly adumbrate great spiritual privileges; but it is easy to suppose that the Apostle views the apostate as partaking only of the former, although dreadfully culpable on account of his abusing things which represent others so sacred.

It seems that a good key to these three passages is found in the words of St. John, (1 *Ep.* ii. 19.) who, speaking of apostates, says:—"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Here the apostle teaches us, that those who apostatize never really belonged to the number of the faithful; and leads us to believe, that if they had, they could not have apostatized. They never were converted—they never had faith. There was therefore, notwithstanding their profession, an entire difference between their nature and that of the people of God. No wonder then, that in time of trial it appeared what manner of persons they were, and that they were found to be at last contrary to their *temporary* profession.

In whatever way we explain the passages which I have quoted as *apparently* subversive of the doctrine of our text, it is clear we are not justified in explaining them so as to make them *really* subversive of it; for no doctrine

could be more clearly stated in the Word of God than the one in question is ; and none could more thoroughly pervade the whole scheme of the Gospel, and the whole system of Divine Truth, than this does. We must therefore continue to hold it, even although we should not be able to satisfy our minds by reducing to harmony with it such passages as seem to contradict it. In the meantime, of this let us ever be assured, that no one part of the Word of God, when properly understood, will be found at variance with another. Wherever there seems a discrepancy, we may rely upon it the fault is in our own understanding, not in the inspired volume.

We have already remarked, that it is not to be inferred from the Apostle's saying that he was *confident*, that he was absolutely certain that every one of the Philippian professing Christians would undoubtedly persevere in that their profession until the Lord's second coming, or the end of their earthly life. Rather are we to consider the apostles as writing to the various Churches, on the supposition that they were sincere in their profession ; and therefore we must consider every thing which they have written to them as Christians, as properly applicable only in case that profession were sincere. The apostles had no different means of judging of the spiritual state of other men from those which we ourselves possess. "*By their fruits ye shall know them,*" was a maxim applicable alike to them as it is to us. They observed the great change which took place in the conduct of their converts to whom they preached Christ, and they justly inferred that they were indeed made partakers of the hope of eternal life. In the apostles' days, there were many obstacles thrown in the

way of those who wished to embrace the Gospel; and it was seldom that any one ventured to make a profession of faith in Christ, if he actually did *not* believe. In this way it was easy in their day to point to those who, as far as man could judge, were really the children of God. Thus it might be safe, in St. Paul's time, to speak of professing Christians as those in whom a good work had begun, which was to be continued until the end of their earthly life. But such an expression of confident hope in regard to all the professing Christians in any one congregation in our days, would not be authorized by our knowledge of the real state of the case. We know that there are in most congregations three different classes: 1. Those concerning whom such an expression would be just and proper. 2. Those to whom it would be altogether inapplicable; and 3. Those of whom we cannot speak but with doubt. To each of these three classes may I now be permitted to address a few words? 1. Ye, who have been privileged to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Saviour, are encouraged by the words of the text. God hath begun in you a *good work*. Ye have been led to find your delight and your satisfaction in the endeavour to serve the Lord. Ye have seen the vanity of that pleasure which is derived from mere worldly enjoyments. Ye have felt the evil and the bitterness which sin produces. And while the burden thereof hath pressed upon you as a burden too heavy for you to bear, God in great mercy hath relieved you of the burden. While you have grieved over the number of your transgressions, you have been consoled by the gracious voice of God addressing you, and saying, "*I will heal your*

backsliding, I will love you freely ; for mine anger is turned away from you." Ye can now look unto God as "reconciling you in Christ to Himself," not imputing your trespasses unto you ; as "making Him who knew no sin, to be sin for you, that ye might be made the righteousness of God in him." The guilt of your past demerits is thus all cancelled ; the accounts against you are all blotted out. Your name stands written in the book of life, and against it there is written not only a full discharge of all past debt, but an explicit promise of an eternal inheritance. You are now numbered among those who are to be the trophies of the Redeemer's victory, and everlasting monuments of his boundless love. You may yet have many a contest to maintain with the enemy, before you get beyond his reach ; but you need not be fearful about the issue, since you are assured that "the Lord himself is on your side," and therefore vain will be the attempts of "all that may rise up against you." You are relieved of the burden of anxiety, and disencumbered of uncertainty concerning your future condition, in order that you might be fitted to run with perseverance and diligence the race set before you. God hath saved you and delivered you from the memory of past sin, that ye might serve him as obedient children, in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life.

2. There may be some here present, who have no hope of happiness at the day of Christ, because they know that in them there hath no good work been ever begun. How unhappy is your condition ! Ye cannot think of the future without a dread of that which may

come upon you. It may be that you flatter yourselves in thoughtful moments with the hope, that although you are not in a good condition at present, yet you may be, before the day of Christ come. This is a most fallacious hope! How many have deceived themselves with it up to the very time when all ground of hope ceases! If we would be wise for our own eternal good, we shall not give our souls rest, until we find peace and joy by cordially receiving the message of life by a crucified Saviour. God waiteth to be gracious to you. He desires to begin in you a good work. He warns you in time of the danger into which you are running by continuing heedless of that good work. Confide entirely in Christ as your all-powerful Saviour, and submit yourselves to His Divine authority. Make yourselves safe, and your future happiness certain, by becoming united to those whom God hath promised to protect in the midst of every danger, and to defend against every foe.

3. It may be that there are some here who are themselves in doubt as to their spiritual state, and could not apply to themselves the confident language which St. Paul uses with regard to the Philippians. What is the reason of this? Perhaps, ye are like those whom Elijah rebuked—halting between two opinions; or like the young man who went away sorrowful from our Lord. You may be undecided,—inclined to the service of God, and yet loth to renounce the world. Or perhaps you are timid, and afraid lest the work of Christ have no relation to you. This is an error that makes many a one doubt. They have the fullest confidence in the power of Christ to save—but they doubt whether the salvation extends

to them. Let such be assured, that whosoever will, may approach the Saviour, and that no preliminary mortifications nor penances are wanted to prepare them as objects of his love and compassion. Do you hate sin? Do you desire, even at the expense of what is unpleasant to your nature, to join yourselves to the service of Christ? Do you choose his approbation, and are you desirous of this, in preference to all the temporary enjoyments which the world can give you? Then I may be permitted to suggest, that the good work hath begun within you, and that you do yourselves an injustice, while you rob yourselves of the comfort to be derived from such language as that of our text. Mourn not in uncertainty. The good work begun God will carry on, until it be perfect at the day of Jesus Christ. You belong to those whom God hath made *just*, whose path is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The seed which the Great Husbandman hath sown in your heart, he will not neglect, but will tender and nourish it, water it with the dew of his heavenly grace, and beam upon it with the sunshine of his love, until the full ripe fruit shall be produced to his own everlasting praise. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Though your own frailty be great, and your temptations numerous, yet take comfort from the assurance, that "his grace is sufficient for you, and his strength made perfect in your weakness." Rejoice ye then at the prospect of the "inheritance which is reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"—even that salvation

which is about "to be revealed in the last time," when our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear in his glory, and make us, who are now weak, like unto Himself in body and soul, clothed with power, to fulfil every holy desire that shall arise in our hearts.



LECTURE III.

PHILIPPIANS I. 7—11.

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart ; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ; that ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

THIS passage resolves itself naturally into two parts : —In the 7th and 8th verses, we have the expression of the Apostle's affectionate feelings for the Philippians ; and in the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses, we have his prayer for them.

All readers of the New Testament, who have studied with care, have had frequent reason to observe unsatisfactory phrases and obscure expressions even in some of the most beautiful and striking passages. This arises

from the difficulty of translating the familiar epistolary style from Greek into English, of which the idioms are very unlike each other. It is possible that to the Philippians the 7th and 8th verses, which to us appear rather incoherent and loose, may have seemed quite natural, and the one sentence easily flowing into the other. If the writings of St. Paul possessed the qualities of grace and ease to those to whom the language in which he wrote was vernacular, it has at least been almost lost to us ; because there is nothing in language so susceptible of injury from *time*, as the particles used for the purpose of connecting thoughts in a sentence, and of passing from one thought to another. Thus it happens, that while almost the whole Bible, when taken in detached sentences, has unfolded its meaning to the diligence of the learned, who have laboured upon it since the days of the Apostles, there is yet great part of it, of which the tracing the connection, and the finding out the coherence with the context, have set at defiance the patient care of the most acute and deep-searching inquirers into the meaning of the Sacred Word. This being the case, it becomes the ordinary Christian frequently to rest satisfied with the measure of edification to be derived even from individual sentences of Holy Writ, although he be quite unable to trace their mutual connection ; just as we should be perfectly satisfied with plucking clusters of grapes even from such branches as, by the abundance of foliage, we could not trace to the main stock of the vine. While however I make this remark, I am not blind to the important fact, that it frequently facilitates the finding of the meaning of particular clauses to know the general scope of the writer

in the passage where such clauses occur ; nor am I unaware of the great injury which has been inflicted on the Scriptures by presumptuous, unlearned persons—and the unlearned are ever the most presumptuous—taking a text, and tearing it as it were out of its connection, in order to prove a point which they were anxious to establish ; whereas, if the text were fairly looked at and compared with its context, it would be seen often to treat of something entirely different from that to which it had been eagerly and forcibly applied. It is, then, the duty of every Christian to do what he can to find out the full meaning of the Divine Word, both in its separate clauses and whole connection ; and for this purpose he is to make a diligent use of his marginal Bible, his commentary, and the public and private instructions of his appointed pastor. Mere critical knowledge of Scripture to be sure will be of very little use to the pious disciple of Christ, but certainly the full benefit of God's Word cannot be enjoyed for practical and devotional purposes, unless we know its proper meaning. For let us be assured, not what we *think* the meaning of God's word is its meaning, but that is the meaning which we must reverence, which the language fairly interpreted affords. Piety, to be solid, must be well-informed. Zeal accompanied with ignorance degenerates into fanaticism ; fanaticism, when it gets the civil power in its own hands, becomes bigotted in spirit, and in conduct persecuting and intolerant. But we must go on with the consideration of our text.

A difficulty arises from the words "*it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.*" If we connect this with the verse immediately

preceding, we shall get a very incongruous meaning, *i. e.* we shall have the Apostle declaring, that the *affection* which he had for the Philippians was a ground of hope to him, that they would continue stedfast to the end in their Christian profession. Surely, however much a minister may be *attached* to his people, he is not rashly to conclude that they are all certainly to be among the number of the saved at the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's affections are not to be the measure of God's judgment. It is better, therefore, to refer the words in question to the 4th verse; and suppose the Apostle to be giving the reason why he made his requests to God for the Philippians *with joy*. It was fit and proper that the Apostle should present his prayers *with joy*, for a people whom he *had in his heart*, as the objects of his most tender solicitude. Thus understood, the passage gives a suitable meaning.

The apostle having told his friends that they were in his heart, next assigns a reason for this, saying, "*Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*" He alludes here to his condition as then a prisoner at Rome: the mention of *defence* shows that the apostle had to contend with some who objected to his conduct in preaching the Gospel; and the mention of *confirmation* shows that the Gospel had already in Rome been received by some, and that an attempt had been made there to turn away their minds from it. We see here how faithful to his Lord the apostle was, and how zealous in the execution of his commission. Not even when in bonds would he desist from his god-like work of making known the love of Christ to his fellow-

sinners. This earnestness must have arisen from his conviction that the gospel was the great, the only, the exclusive remedy for the evils under which man groans, and the sole way of deliverance and escape from the wrath to come. Had he held the same views as some pretended wise men of our day, he would have staid at home in Tarsus, exercising his peaceful trade, instead of going about from city to city "*turning the world upside down*," and thereby rendering himself so obnoxious to the magistrates as to cause them to deprive him of his personal liberty. But Paul had been taught otherwise than our modern so-called Christian philosophers. He knew that it was of infinite importance to have proper and clear views concerning God as the Creator, and Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. He knew that hell was to be escaped, and heaven reached, only by *believing* in the *Lord Jesus Christ*; that whosoever did not know and believe in this Saviour was on the way to certain and eternal ruin. Was there not then a sufficient reason for him to put both his life and liberty in jeopardy, in order to preach the gospel? Would that we all deemed the gospel to be so precious to ourselves, and so needful to those who are ignorant of it, as to lead us to follow the example of the apostle, and to spare neither life, nor liberty, nor property, nor pleasure, in order to establish, confirm, and propagate it! Until we are brought to this, we shall remain without sufficient proof either to ourselves or to others, that we are indeed the disciples of that Master by whose name we are called.

The Philippians were partakers of the Apostle's *grace*. And what *grace* was this? Most probably it was the

favour of God, and the joy of the Holy Ghost vouchsafed to him, in order that he might be supported during the trying period of his imprisonment. In what sense could the Philippians be partakers of this? Perhaps in this sense,—that their own faith in the doctrines which he had formerly preached to them, was confirmed by their hearing of the joy and constancy with which he bore the persecutions which he endured in declaring the gospel. Besides this, we must bear in mind, that God has in a most wonderful manner connected together the interests of all the members of “his Church militant here on earth;” so that there never has been any season of joy to the whole body of his Church so great, as when some eminent martyr was boldly and stedfastly giving his testimony to the world in favour of the truth. When we see the martyr so strong in his faith of the great things that are invisible, as to despise for their sake the momentary pains which unbelievers can inflict upon the body, our sympathies and love are enkindled towards him, and we almost envy him the honour which the Blessed Head of the Church hath conferred upon him. Our faith too then becomes strong, and the very vision of heaven bursts upon our souls. O how strong the sympathy between the living members of Christ’s body! If one member suffer, all suffer with it; if one member rejoice, all are partakers of the joy; if one be lighted up with the beams of the Divine favour, all the rest are illumined by their reflection.

You observe in verse 8, that the Apostle is so desirous to prove the love he bore to the Philippians, that he uses an oath in regard to it. This is not the only place in his writings where such an oath occurs. If you look

on the margin of your Bibles, you will see four other passages marked. From this habit of St. Paul using solemn asseverations, it seems a fair inference, that the Society of Friends are wrong in their interpretation of those sayings of our Lord where he forbids *swearing*. If the occasion be important, there is reason to think, from this example of the apostle, that there can be nothing wrong in calling upon God as witness to that which we wish to announce to others as a certain truth. Let me not, however, in saying this, be considered as justifying a habit of swearing. You will mark that I have given as a condition "*if the occasion be important.*" Nothing can be more offensive to a pious mind, than to hear the Almighty appealed to, either in cases where there is no need for asseveration, or when the conversation runs upon something which it is both a disgrace and a sin to talk about. Never should the awful name of God be mixed up with any thing that would prevent the mind from feeling that reverence which is due to our Creator. When we approach holy subjects, our minds should be freed from low ideas, as Moses was commanded "to put off his shoes" as he drew near to the burning bush, from which God spake to him. And when we speak on worldly affairs, or indulge in harmless plesantry, we are most consistent as Christians when we guard our speech from being mixed up with allusions to the sacred subjects of our religion, and especially from being studded with the reverend name and attributes of God. These remarks, that I now make, are not without an object. I am persuaded, that there still are many professing Christians who are guilty of the sin that I am speaking of, although a great im-

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provement has taken place within the present generation. We may be sure, that we shall ever enjoy peace in the exercise of our religion only in proportion as our minds are moulded to conformity with the Spirit which the Scriptures teach us to indulge. If we *honour God, we shall be honoured by Him ; but if we despise Him, we shall be lightly esteemed.*

The last clause of the 8th verse contains an expression which requires explanation. It was the custom among the Jews to speak of "*the bowels*" as the seat of strong affections : this may be seen from many passages of Scripture, which it is needless to quote. The clause in question may therefore be translated into plain modern English thus : *How greatly I long after you all with that strong affection which all the disciples of Jesus Christ have for each other.* This affection is called "*the bowels of Jesus Christ,*" perhaps, because He is the source whence it arises. And as He is the source of it, so we are not to expect to find it existing except among those who are united to Him by a living faith.

When we hear the Apostle thus strongly expressing his ardent affection for the Philippians, can we refrain from a sigh of regret that we find so little of it between pastors and people in the present day? Some people are made the dupes of their pastors, by suffering themselves to be led into all manner of gross superstition. They look up to them with stupid wonder, as those who have power to perform the miracle of turning bread and wine into God, as they most blasphemously express it. Others are contented to listen to their pastor's discourses as they do to an actor in the theatre. He pan-

ders to this unchristian taste, by endeavouring to say something that will strike the fancy or please the ear ; while he is altogether regardless of his obligation to commend himself to every man's conscience by a manifestation of the truth of God. His discourses are listened to, and no wonder that they are, rather as compositions to be criticized, than as solemn admonitions designed to affect the heart. Such a minister, even when successful, is only admired as a speaker, never loved as a pastor ; and in his turn he does not love his flatterers, but despises them in his heart. His discourses are powerless, as every human thing must be. No conversions of sinners are brought about by them, and no edification afforded to believers.—Still worse even than this is the case of that minister and people, who have agreed together to preach and listen to heretical teaching—even that which excludes every thing from the Christian religion which distinguishes it from heathenism. "*If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*" Such persons may have that friendship for each other, which we sometimes find existing between those who hold the same views on politics or science ; but they are utter strangers to that cordial affection, and reciprocal love, which is ever found to exist between the faithful minister of Christ and those who by his means have been turned from the error of their way, converted from a life of sin and folly, and brought to cast themselves as humble penitents before Him who is the author of life, and the source of happiness.

The apostle, after expressing his affection for his friends, now proceeds to state his *prayer* to God for them. And how naturally does he pass from the one to

the other! What greater good can we do for those whom we love, than supplicate blessings for them from Him who hath every good to bestow?

Great as was the affection of the apostle for his friends, he yet was not blind to the fact, that they were not beyond improvement. They loved their Lord, he knew, and they also loved him; but yet he prays that their "*love might abound more and more.*" No strength of affection, no zeal of devotedness, can ever be great enough in the Christian to his Lord. Every thing that tends to increase this love ought to be attended to. He should think on what the Lord Jesus Christ hath done for his salvation; on his leaving His glory in heaven, and coming down to suffer in this wicked world; on the patience and forbearance which He exercised towards him in the time of his unbelief and carelessness; on the provision which the Saviour hath made for the wants of his soul, by appointing ordinances through which the Holy Spirit carries on the happy work of sanctification. He should think too, that it is on account of what Christ hath done, that he has been snatched from the pit of endless perdition, and made to walk in the narrow path which leads to everlasting life and glory. Redeemed soul! thy Saviour loveth thee with an everlasting love! Canst thou then be indifferent to Him?

The Apostle's prayer is, "*that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.*" The latter word means that power of discrimination which is acquired by experience—and the use of it is that which is stated in the first clause of the 10th verse—"*that ye may approve things that are excellent.*"

It may be difficult to say what is the precise meaning of the apostle in these words. Does he mean to say "that he prayed that the love of his friends, combined with knowledge and judgment for the approving of things that are excellent, might abound?" Or does he pray "that their love might so abound, as to result in such knowledge and judgment?" The words as they stand in the original may be construed in either way; but as the latter sense would seem to make love a secondary thing, whereas Paul elsewhere makes it the greatest of all Christian ornaments and graces, so it would seem we ought to understand the words in the former sense. And thus we have a very valuable lesson for all Christians, *viz.* that love must be combined with knowledge and judgment. If love be uninstructed and injudicious, it will be guilty of many unseemly errors: it will be precipitate and rash. It will be led by over-zeal to do such things as might prejudice the interests of the Great Master whom it would serve. While we love the Lord with *all our heart, and soul, and strength*, let us learn from Scripture, from reflection, and experience, to show forth our love in that way which will most redound to the honor of our Master, and most promote the influence of his saving health. Let it be shown in trying and finding out such things that differ, so as to see those which are *excellent* and clearly *commendable*; and having found them out, let us be diligent in doing them. This is the first petition of the Apostle's prayer. The second is, "*that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.*" By *sincere*, we are not to understand free from deceit and hypocrisy. This is indeed the present meaning of the

word ; but it was not the meaning in the days of our translators. They understood by it the same thing as is clearly the meaning of the original, *i. e.* “*pure*, and unsullied by any spots of immorality.” The primary application of *sincere* is to that which can be safely brought to view, and judged by the full light of the mid-day sun ; hence it came to be equivalent to *perfect*, *blameless*, and lastly, free from deceit, or unsophisticated. Let it be understood however, that this last is a modern application ; and that in the New Testament it is always applied in the sense of “*pure and unspotted*.” As to the words, “*without offence*,” the English reader may suppose them to mean harmless, *i. e.* “*without giving offence*.” This is not the meaning however. They mean rather “*without any stumbling*,” *i. e.* without tripping in one’s way. It is proper to observe, that a course of conduct, good or bad, is in Scriptural language called *a way* ; hence the metaphorical phrase arises, “*to stumble in one’s way*.” And this of course means, to behave in such a manner as that the course of one’s conduct shall appear interrupted, or broken in upon ; *i. e.* the even tenor becomes rough, and some obstruction appears which ought not to have presented itself. In the New Testament “*to offend*” has two senses : (1) to cause another to stumble in his way, or to lead him into sin ; (2) to stumble in one’s own way. And it *never* means there, as it does in common language, to *make one angry*. If this remark be borne in mind by the young Christian, who is desirous to understand his Bible, it will save him a good deal of trouble.

The meaning then of this second petition in the Apostle’s prayer is, “*that ye may be blameless in your*

reputation, and unfaltering in your walk, till the day of Christ." O what a noble standard to aim at! Who would not be desirous earnestly to come up to this? When we think of our profession; who our Master and Saviour is; can we fail to wish to be what the apostle here prays the Philippians might be? Are we not desirous to see the trophies of our Redeemer's victory over Satan lustrous and attractive? Do we not desire to commend to others the cleansing efficacy of His precious blood, the sanctifying power of His Blessed Spirit, the sustaining virtue of His all-powerful grace? And then, oh! how great the privilege, how unspeakable the bliss of being presented in the day of Christ blameless in conduct and stedfast in faith; for then we may "*have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him!*"

The apostle goes on with his prayer—"being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." Mark brethren here, that as in the foregoing verse the apostle had prayed for negative virtue, *i. e.* blamelessness and stedfastness; so he here goes farther, and wishes his friends to be distinguished and marked for real, positive acts of virtue and goodness. An allusion seems to be made to the words of our Lord, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." These fruits of righteousness doubtless mean acts of generosity, self-denial, benevolence, kindness to the poor, and liberality for the promotion of Christ's Kingdom, by the preaching of the gospel. The apostle prays that his friends may produce not one or two of these fruits—but that they may be filled with them; evidently having before his mind the idea of a vine bowed down to the earth by

the weight of its clusters. Let it be our constant endeavour, thus to have ourselves covered and filled with the fruits of righteousness; and let our souls be acceptable before our God, even as a well-watered garden is grateful to the sight and to the smell of those that pass through it. And what greater motive for desiring and praying to be thus found could be set before us, than that presented by the Apostle—"these fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God?" Can any thing engage us so much to be diligent, as the conviction that our conduct is giving honour and glory to Him who loveth us with an everlasting love, and from whom we are to derive our blessedness throughout all eternity? Is it indeed possible that man in his low estate and utter nothingness can bring honour to Him who is exalted above all worlds, and whose majesty pervades the universe? Observe, however, how the apostle qualifies this. Man does not and cannot confer this honour of his own power; it comes "*by Jesus Christ.*" Thus we are viewed as in Jesus Christ, and not otherwise can God approve of any thing that we can do. But our meanest efforts in His service, when made under the influence of faith in His Blessed Son, are looked upon not merely as deserving of commendation—this of itself would be wonderful—but as actually procuring to Him glory and praise. Oh! that we could be all drawn and enticed into so blessed and honourable a service as this!

I desire you, brethren, to mark, finally, how carefully the apostle guards us against the popish doctrine of human merit. Virtue and good deeds are called "*the fruits of righteousness,*" i. e. the *result* of a righteous-

ness implanted within us. Now observe, this presupposes a certain state, one in which we shall be capable of performing virtuous deeds. The good deeds are the result of that good state, and do not themselves constitute it; in the same manner as fruits presuppose trees, and are not themselves trees. Again, the Apostle does not say that these fruits of righteousness procure any thing for the sinner, either pardon for his own past sin, or merit to counterbalance in God's sight the demerit of others: No, this popish doctrine was not heard of in the Apostle's day, except among the heathen. He only recommended the fruits of righteousness on the ground that they were as a sweet savour, an acceptable offering to Him who hath given us His Son to be unto us "*righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*"

We are called to the practice of Christian virtues, not that we may obtain as a reward the salvation of our souls, but that we yield and present to God the humble but acceptable reward for salvation already obtained,—obtained not on account of any thing we have ever given for it, but freely and graciously, bountifully and most undeservedly, through the Blessed Author of all good to miserable man, the Lord Jesus Christ; whose name is above every name, and whose love to us even the songs of angels cannot adequately celebrate. "*Now unto Him that (thus) loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*"

LECTURE IV.

PHILIPPIANS I. 12—20.

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel ; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places ; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will : the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds : but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then ? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached ; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

WE are in great uncertainty as to the precise circumstances in the life of St. Paul to which this passage refers. You know that the authentic account of him after his conversion, as drawn up by St. Luke, and presented in the Acts of the Apostles, does not come down any farther than the period of his first arrival in Rome : and it is probable that this epistle was written after he had been there two or three years. We must not, therefore, expect to find in the New Testament any very intelligible account of the circumstances referred to in our text. This much is clear from the passage we have read,—that the Apostle had met with opposition at Rome after he had been sometime there (more than two years at the least ; see end of the Acts) of such a nature, that the Philippians might fear the preaching of the Gospel was stopped by it ; that this opposition was so far from hindering, that it forwarded the Gospel ; that the Apostle's imprisonment for Christ's sake was made the subject of conversation even in the palace of the Emperor, and publicly throughout the city : it may also easily be inferred that this publicity given to the Gospel, as that for which Paul was in bonds, was followed by a reception thereof on the part of many. While the Gospel was thus successful, notwithstanding the imprisonment of the Apostle, there came forward many to preach it, being rendered bold for this work, " by the Apostle's bonds " it is said. It is hard to see how this was. Was it, that, seeing the easy nature of the Apostle's imprisonment, they thought that, if the consequence of preaching the Gospel was to be no more severe than this, they might venture upon it too ? Or was it, that beholding the patience and boldness with

which the Apostle bore his imprisonment, their emulation was stirred up, and they longed to be like him? This latter supposition is the more likely of the two. We know it is natural for men to be emboldened in defence of a cause which they believe to be good, by seeing others suffering in it.

Of the preachers of the Gospel at Rome during the Apostle's imprisonment, there were two very different classes:—1. The Apostle's friends, who, knowing that he was set for the defence of the Gospel, preached it out of love to him. 2. The Apostle's bitter enemies, who preached the Gospel not with a pure intention, but were quickened to diligence by the malicious wish of "*adding affliction to his bonds.*" However sad it might be, to see persons preaching Christ under the influence of envy and strife, yet so long as the gospel was declared, good was to be hoped for, and the apostle rejoiced in looking forward to the issue. Although the enemies of the apostle supposed they should add *affliction to his bonds*, they were only in reality contributing to his deliverance. "For," says St. Paul, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation (deliverance) through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The apostle was too well protected to be hurt by them: he had entrenched himself behind the impregnable defence recommended by our Lord, when He says, "*Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.*" By the supply of the Spirit which Jesus Christ hath promised to his disciples, when exposed to danger in His cause, and which the apostle expected in answer to the prayers of his friends, he earnestly hoped that in nothing he should

be ashamed, but be enabled with all boldness to magnify Christ in his body, whether by living or dying.

In the passage thus briefly gone over, we see one or two things worthy of observation :—

1. The Apostle's great interest in the spread of the Gospel.

2. His joy at knowing that the Gospel was indeed preached, although not in a way that he could altogether approve of.

1. His interest in the spread of the Gospel was so intense, that he cheerfully exposed himself to suffering and persecution in its behalf. He fully believed the Divine origin of the Gospel. He knew that it was the "power of God unto salvation." He saw the miserable condition of the heathen world around—and he knew that the reception of the gospel was the only adequate remedy. He every where witnessed the powerful influence of the gospel in transforming the character of those who believed his doctrine. He saw the effect that it had upon their minds, by rendering them happy in the midst of the trials incident to this earthly life, and bold when exposed to the violence of fierce persecutors. He knew that the doctrine which brought "life and immortality to light" could not be received without working an entire revolution in the social community of those who received it. He was persuaded, in short, that the gospel was "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed it;" and could he, then, feel indifferent as to its success? Not only, however, did he labour in propagating the gospel, because he saw that it was the sovereign remedy for man's miseries; but also because it was the will of God that

he should so labour—for, saith he, “*woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!*” Thus, even when we observe no immediate happy result from making known the Gospel, we are still to go on with it. God hath commanded us to work; and we must not grow slack for want of seeing the result.

When we think of the zeal of St. Paul, may we not be ashamed for the lukewarmness of many professing Christians in our age? Are there not many who seem altogether to have lost sight of the fact, that there is a text spoken by our Blessed Lord Himself, which says, “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!*” Are there not some who sneer at the attempt to convert the heathen of the present day, as far sunk in sin and wretchedness, but no farther than those who were turned to God by the preaching of St. Paul? Shame to men who are contented to enjoy the social benefits procured by the gospel, and yet have no desire to communicate those benefits to such as are destitute of them—and who as well as they are capable of enjoying them! Let us all be assured that, without the gospel, man is unhappy in time, and ruined for eternity; and then, if we have any benevolence in our nature, we cannot remain heedless of its extension. Let us be assured, that it is the will of God that all men should be saved, and the command of Christ that His gospel be preached for that end; and then we shall be so far from being regardless of the extension of the gospel, that we shall view it as the duty which first claims our attention,—the duty which must be attended to before we can safely set about any thing wherein our temporal interests alone are concerned. If a man be more in-

interested in adding an acre to his possessions, or another £1000. to his treasures, than about adding a new soul to the Saviour, how can such a man make himself believe that he has "the mind of Christ?" *"Now if any man have not the mind of Christ, he is none of his."* It therefore, brethren, comes plainly to this, (and let us not be backward to avow it,) that whatever man or Church does not possess a missionary spirit, a desire to extend the gospel, it cannot be said of such that they really belong to Christ. Never has the gospel yet taken possession of any soul, without making that soul anxious for the salvation of others. This desire for the salvation of others does not arise from any overweening conceit of the Christian's high estate in comparison of theirs; but from a certain conviction of the misery to which man without the gospel is exposed. No one therefore can be destitute of a missionary spirit, who is not either ignorant of Scripture, or else a rejecter of its most solemn explicit statements. May we not attribute much of the indifference to missions that exists still in the minds of some in this country, to the evil influence of infidelity, and a false liberalism, that prevailed so much throughout the West of Europe and also in Great Britain at the end of last century, and the beginning of this, among the educated and wealthy classes of society? Let us hope, however, that this indifference will soon entirely die out—and that men will by and bye be as much ashamed to stand aloof from efforts to extend the gospel, as to broach in respectable company any of the obnoxious opinions which once made the staple article in the conversations of men admired much for their genius and natural attainments. A

better day, thank God! hath dawned upon us. May the light go on increasing unto the perfect day! We are ashamed of the opinions once held by our great men—let us now boldly shake ourselves free from all the trammels which those opinions have thrown around us. Henceforth, believing in the divine original of our religion, and feeling that it is the truth, let us ever deem it a most sacred duty to do what we can to extend this religion in the world, so long as there are nations yet under the power of darkness, and enslaved under the hard bondage of idolatry. When we say “*Thy Kingdom come!*” in our daily prayer, let us learn that it is part of our duty, and that a principal part, to unite *our* labours with those of all the people of God, for the fulfilment of the ancient prophecy—“All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord.” “I have sworn by myself,” saith the Lord, “the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear: Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

2. Let us learn a lesson from the apostle's joy at knowing that the gospel was indeed preached, although not in a way that he could altogether approve of.

As there is a danger of sacrificing truth on the side of liberality of opinion, so there is danger of entirely shutting it up within an incrustation of bigotry. From both of these dangers we are guarded by the language of Scripture. What we know to be truth we must not yield up, even although the holding of it should endanger our life and liberty: and herein we are encouraged by the example of St. Paul, and all other emi-

ment martyrs of ancient and modern times. What we know to be error of a dangerous nature, we must resist with the most determined opposition. "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;" i. e. let him be expelled from your communion. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." St. John saith, "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, (i. e. say not "Peace be with thee," to him.) For he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." The truth of God then, as a sacred deposit committed to us, we must hold; and as we know not how much moral conduct is influenced by the holding of speculative truth, we must be careful to preserve the truth that we do believe pure and unmixed by human philosophy, "*as it was first delivered to the saints.*"

Important however as this regard to truth undoubtedly is, we must take care not to be carried into the extreme, of denouncing every principle as unsound, merely because it may be stated with such modifications as we cannot agree to. What passes under the name of religious truth is a system of vast compass. Parts of that system are plain and simple, visible and patent to the senses; other parts are intricate, and complex, and cannot be scrutinized. It may be expected that all should think alike of parts of the former kind, and indeed all are here very much agreed. But

need we wonder at finding men holding different opinions concerning parts of the latter kind? What God has clearly spoken, we ought firmly to hold; but where He has left things at large, there will be room for a diversity of opinion.

Should it ever happen, then, that we hear of the success of the gospel as preached by those who differ from us on some religious opinions, how ought we to behave? Shall we endeavour to detract from the merit of their labours, by representing them as done on wrong principles, and therefore not likely to be permanent? This indeed has been done by some in the present day, who glory in the name of *Churchman*, and sneer at Dissenters; but, let me ask, Is it the thing that we should expect from the author of the words of our text, were he again in the world? There is no such difference between Churchman and Dissenter, that while the one preaches the gospel, the other preaches something else; if then "*Christ is preached*," let us say with the Apostle, "*We therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*" O how pernicious is the influence of religious bigotry! It has led some writers belonging to our own Church, to descend to the unfair and traitorous measure of quoting the journals of infidel voyagers and travellers, in order to cast a slight upon the labours of dissenting missionaries, even when attested to be valuable and productive by numerous most competent witnesses. We grieve at the conduct of such fellow-Churchmen; and we are sad to think how little they have caught of the charitable spirit of the excellent Liturgy which they use, and of the Bible which they read.

But what shall we think of some among ourselves who have deliberately—as they give us to believe—come to the conclusion, that it is their duty to stand aloof from the missionary efforts of the Church nearest to their own, on the plea that some of the agents, by whom those efforts are directed, have been guilty of a breach of Church discipline,—a breach, let me add, which several of the English Bishops have declared they cannot interfere to heal? Have such persons really made up their minds to this after due reflection,—after humble prayer for Divine guidance,—and after reading those texts of Scripture which refer to the subject? Is it possible that professing Christians can look upon their obligations to fulfil the last command of Christ as so light a matter, that they may be excused from them by a paltry quarrel arising? If part of the city were on fire, what should we think of the men that refused to join in the extinguishing it, on the plea that a few of the engine men had been convicted of insubordination to their superior? Or again, what should we think of men refusing to contribute their share in support of a defensive force to the country, when an invasion is threatened, on the ground that certain of the inferior officers had acted either apart from the plan of the general, or contrary to his orders? Shall we be more in earnest, more like men of sound sense and judgment in things of a worldly nature, and lukewarm and silly only in regard to those things which relate to the salvation of immortal souls, and the extension of the kingdom and glory of our Blessed Redeemer? Remember the words of our Lord when

one of his disciples said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils and we forbid him—because he followeth not with us." "*Forbid him not*"—said the Lord—"*for he that is not against us is for us.*" If indeed we be zealous in our efforts to propagate the gospel, and anxious to increase the number of them that call the Saviour Blessed, we shall not be stopped in the prosecution of our labours by every little misunderstanding that may arise among us. We are soldiers of the same King; we may not then refuse to fight when the critical day comes, because some of us have had words with each other. We are fellow-labourers of the same Husbandman; we may not then throw down the sickle when the fields are white to the harvest, because some of our paltry interests are not yet adjusted. No! brethren, let us rather buckle on our armour to the contest; gird up our loins to the labour; and let us be so engrossed in the cause of our King, so earnest in the work of our Master, that all our mutual past quarrels and misunderstandings shall be entirely lost sight of, and for ever buried in oblivion!

No better occasion on which to compose all our differences can be found, than the united effort to promote the influence of our common faith. If we thought of the greatness of the work of preaching the gospel to the heathen—of the vast importance of the knowledge of the truth to them—of the great difference between them as heathens, and us as Christians—of the depth of their misery, and the extent of our privileges; we should be so eagerly engaged in this work, as even, unawares to ourselves, to look upon each other as truly

brethren, and “fellow-workers for the kingdom of God.” Let us often think on the numerous great points on which we are all agreed, and the vast discordance between us and the heathen in regard to those points ; and then we shall see that we do not really differ so much that we may not recognize each other as friends, and present the picture, the lovely picture, of the “*brethren that dwell together in unity*.”

But perhaps our opponent will say—“The cases are not parallel. St. Paul rejoiced that the gospel was preached, even when done in envy and strife : we also rejoice when the gospel is preached ; but Paul did not contribute his assistance to such strife-making preachers ; and so we think it our duty not to contribute to any institution which takes part with those that make strife.” To this I must answer. I grant that the cases are not exactly parallel ; but the advantage is not in favour of our opponent. St. Paul rejoiced that the gospel was preached even by those that sought thereby to “add affliction to his bonds ;” but our opponent has determined to withdraw his sympathy from those who are moved by no such malicious feelings, but who preach Christ from pure love and compassion to the perishing heathen ; and the only reason he can assign is, that they receive help from some who have acted irregularly. Neither the preachers, however, in this case, nor those who assist them, are moved with any bitterness or rancour against any of their other brethren in this that they do. They all would use the same means—and they all would look for the same result. May God’s blessing crown the labours of both ; and let them go on working harmoniously together. I have no doubt,

that were St. Paul now in the world, he would not see reason why the whole body of Evangelical Protestants should not unite together, not only in their worship at home, but in some plan for sending the gospel abroad. It is unfortunate, that Christians have now come to think that there is no harm in forming—nay rather, that it is their duty to form—different and separate churches (as they are called) in order to worship God. There is no doubt that men differed as much in the Apostle's days as they do now—and yet, for all that, they did not think it necessary to set up different and rival churches in the same town. When we return to the apostolical model of a Church, (*i. e.* uniting in one Church, although differing in minor matters) we shall be ashamed of our present petty differences hindering a full union and fellowship. In the meantime, let us all strive to diminish the number of those points which are litigated, to close up the breaches in the walls of Zion, and to remove all causes of strife from among her sons. While we hold fast articles of faith, and prove unflinching and uncompromising in defending the truth of the Gospel, let us be fair, and candid, and liberal in the treatment which we give to the opinions of one another.

Finally, Let us learn from our text to be so much interested in the Lord's work, as to view ourselves only in connexion with it. We rejoice when Christ is preached to ourselves, because thereby eternal life is freely offered to us; and we rejoice when Christ is preached to others, because thereby a numerous company of redeemed souls are brought to join with us in the new song of Moses and the Lamb. Fixing our

thoughts on the imperishable joys of eternity which have been procured to us by Christ, we are prepared to wish, that He should be magnified in our body, whether it be by life or by death.



LECTURE V.

PHILIPPIANS I. 21.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

STRONG was the affection which the apostle St. Paul had for the people to whom he wrote these words. His connection with them had begun in trouble and persecution ; and that which has been brought about in the midst of difficulties, and in spite of them, is generally a favourite, and much thought of. Paul might well have said in reference to the Philippians, as he said about Onesimus, that they were the children of his bonds. And certain it is, that such a devoted servant of the Lord as Paul was, would be ready to be treated again as he was at Philippi, in order that he might again be the instrument of bringing glory to God, by the gathering out from the unbelieving Gentiles of "a people for his name."

The Philippians were "a crown of joy" to the apostle, whose preaching was blessed to their conversion : and accordingly he speaks to them out of the fulness of his heart. He tells them of his joys and of his trials, well knowing that from them he would receive deep sympathy, and the benefit of their united prayers.

Far different was the light in which St. Paul was regarded by his converts, from that in which some preachers in modern days seek to be regarded. He did not strive to please as a fine speaker ; nor to arouse attention by allusions to the stirring political movements of the time. Rather, it was *his* practice to render his hearers careful about the state of their souls ; to make them all enquire, as the jailer at Philippi did, " What must we do to be saved ? "

Truly, brethren, this of all inquiries is the most important. And what will it avail us at the hour of leaving this passing world, if, with much that man calls knowledge, we be ignorant on this point. History is amusing, science is captivating, politics are exciting ; but a time is coming,—and we know not how soon,—at which these will be found insufficient to engage us. The hope of glory and rest, in that state which is now unseen, is the only thing which can then be of use to us. With this hope, then, let us make ourselves familiar, even in the time of our health. Let this hope sweeten the disappointments, sorrows, and trials, which we all have occasionally to meet, even in our happiest days. When such trials come, consoling is the reflection, that after our appointed time of trial is over, the day of joy and of perfect peace shall break in upon us.

St. Paul tells us in our text " that for him to live was Christ." We are to learn from this, how much he was engrossed with the service of Christ. The expression, you observe, is peculiar. He does not say—" For me to live is to have an opportunity of engaging further in the service of Christ ; " nor does he say—" For me to

live is to be put in the way of receiving more of the grace of Christ in the season of trial." Both of these, doubtless, the apostle means by what he does say: but the words which he uses testify the warmth, the fervour of his mind, when contemplating the subject. To live was to be to him "Christ;" and that included every thing that was good,—every thing which he deemed worth living for. His mind was so engrossed with his Saviour, that only He, and not the gifts which He bestows, could be thought of. This was a very different state of mind, from what we often suffer ourselves to be in. When it pleases God to send us prosperity and comfort, we are too often so taken up with these favours, that we almost totally lose sight of Him, from whom they come. Surely this is not right. It ought to be our endeavour to stir up our souls to feel grateful for all Divine favours, and to show forth our gratitude not only with our lips, but also by increased diligence in God's service, by greater devotedness of heart to Him, greater charity to all men, and greater love to our Christian brethren, who with us are partakers of the same glorious hope, the same precious faith, and the same Divine nature.

I have heard a contrast drawn between our Saviour and St. Paul, in which the latter was represented as the advocate of a higher degree of holiness than the former judged necessary. Paul was said to demand of human nature what was not in its power to give. He was therefore deemed unreasonable. By this means, an absurd distinction is laid down between Paul and that Blessed Master who inspired him to teach the doctrines and duties which he has left written in his

epistles to the early churches. Let those who affect to see this comparative strictness of Paul, and leniency of Christ, only read with attention the Sermon on the Mount, and the story of the rich young man who went away sorrowful,—and then say whether there be any real ground for this opinion. It was surely the Saviour, and not St. Paul, who said, “Whosoever will be my disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.” It was the Saviour, and not Paul, who uttered these memorable words—“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple ;” *i. e.* (as explained by our Saviour elsewhere,) “he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

If such language has any meaning, surely the Author of it is not to be considered as a less strict teacher of morals than the apostle, who said, “*I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service: and be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*”

The truth is, that both Christ the Great Master, and Paul the eminent disciple, (as was to have been expected,) both agree in enforcing the same holy mode of

life upon God's people ; the one saying, "*Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect ;*" and the other echoing the words, "*Be ye followers of God as dear children.*"

Persons who wish to quiet their consciences, under a conviction that they never aim at this standard of devotedness to God, are sometimes found setting aside the force of such teaching under the name of *enthusiasm*, *puritanism*, and such like unsavoury things ; but let it be far from us thus irreverently to treat the plain commands of our Saviour Christ,—the earnest entreaties of Him, who hath bought us with His own blood. He who hath done so much for us is surely entitled to our most devoted regard, and may safely lay claim to the first place in our heart.

I may perhaps by some be accused of *puritanism*, by speaking as I now do : but I shall be accused in good company. It is such puritanism as was taught long before the 16th century ; it is such as our Saviour, and his apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, taught at the beginning of the Gospel ; it is such as Augustine defended ; it is such as à Kempis and Fénelon in the Church of Rome, such as Leighton and Hammond in the Church of England, spent their energies in preaching, and their days in acting up to. I have no doubt that the obligation to live a holy life, to which we have been alluding, has ever been viewed in the same light by the saints of God in every age. Indeed, how could it be otherwise ? They all have sought to govern their lives by the same unerring rule ; they have all been led by the same Spirit ; they all look for the same glory ; they are all candidates for the same sinless abode.

How then, brethren, stands the matter with us? Can we say with St. Paul, "*For us to live is Christ?*" Perhaps candour will demand a reply in the negative. We, haply, give little of our thoughts to Christ; we perhaps make our business of the world, and thrust our thoughts about Christ into one corner of an holy-day. It is not so, I trust, with us all. Truly, it is only when we enjoy Christ, that we enjoy happiness. For without Him, how worthless is all earthly pleasure!

"*To me to live is Christ!*" Well might Paul say so, since he lived so devotedly to the service of his Lord. This is he who once said, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart; for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus?" No doubt he found that the service, on which he had entered, was a reasonable service; that he was not sent on a warfare at his own charges; but that He who appointed trials for him, also gave him grace sufficient for his day. Such will it ever be with those who yield themselves up, as God's willing servants. Those that take delight in his ways, shall find that there is a great reward for them that "*walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*" "*Blessed even now are they that have the God of Jacob for their refuge: Yea, happy is that people who have the Lord for their God!*" How is it with us? Do we find delight in the service of our God? Is His worship a comfort and solace to our hearts? And do we turn to it as a refuge from the buffetings and anxieties of a sinful world?

Many there are who cannot say, "*For us to live is Christ.*" Rather might such say, "For us to live,

is to add to the number of our sins ; for us to live, is to revel in all excess of rebellion against God, and thus heap up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Some again might say, "For us to live is to enjoy mirth and frivolity : these to be sure do not make us happy ; but they at least banish serious reflection from our mind, and that is doing good service ; for were we to think for a moment how unstable our present being is, we should be miserable." Oh, that such had a more happy portion ! The believer has no reason to banish his most serious reflections. Of all the ills of this life, whatever alternative present itself, he can say, "*It is the Lord ; let Him do what seemeth Him good.*" And even when the question is as to life or death, he can say, "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

It appears to me that the text leads us to expect that the life of a believer will be a life of devotedness to the Saviour. He is to be the Master whom we serve ; He is to be the guide to direct ; He the Captain under whom we fight ; and He the King to give laws. His love is to constrain and stir us up to all good works ; to cheer us when we are faint ; to fortify us when we are weak ; and to confirm us when we are unstable. His glory we are to deem it our highest honour to seek : for the promotion of this we are to be willing to *spend and be spent* ; to live, and to die. And how are we to seek this glory ? We are to endeavour to show it forth in our own life. We are to be watchful, lest we ever should be found doing those things which are inconsistent with our holy profession. We are to exhibit daily that spirit of meekness and quietness, "*which is in the*

sight of God of great price." Are we thoroughly persuaded of the love of God to us, and of our unworthiness of his boundless mercy? Then let us show this, by walking humbly before him all the days of our life. Are we persuaded that to us "*much has been forgiven?*" Then let us "*love much.*" Are we persuaded that in days past we have been neglectful of our duty? Then let us hereafter "*walk circumspectly, redeeming the time.*" In this way *for us to live will be Christ.* But we are to seek the *glory of Christ* in those who are entrusted to our care. Parents are to take care that their children be brought up "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" They are to strive to imbue their minds, while yet tender, with the saving truths of the Gospel. They are to tell them of what Christ hath done for their souls, and what return He expects from them for His great love. Again, Masters are to conduct themselves towards their servants, not with haughty imperiousness, but in that manner which shows that they remember they themselves have a Master in heaven. Masters must present a holy example for the imitation of those who are placed under them: for the uneducated are ever more easily led by example than by precept; always better judges of what they see in the outward life, than what is read to them out of books.

There was a time when it was fashionable, in the higher circles, to curse and blaspheme: their dependents learned the practice, and then almost every sentence was disfigured with some irreverent expression. A salutary change has taken place; so that now, he who curses is considered as no gentleman: and the

consequences of this change are already very visible among the humbler classes of the community. Let those who have influence persevere in diligently following every good work, and we shall soon see wonders wrought among those, who, having ceased to fear God, do not regard man; who, having chosen their own ways as the best, tread order and law in the dust, and rush headlong into anarchy.

But I find I am putting before you an inferior motive: I am recommending you to *live to Christ*, for the worldly benefit you are to have from so doing. Well, then, I will put forward a higher motive. Think on what Christ has done for you, and then say, is it too much to ask you to live to his glory? It is surely an honour to be recognized as the disciples of such a Master; to be known and that publicly as the subjects of such a King. Many are afraid to let it be known that they wish to live a pious life. They would, for example, shrink from holding family-prayer at the stated hour, if any stranger were in the house,—lest they should be set down as *weak* or *ill-bred*. I hope we shall have no such fears. God grant us strength to own Him now, before all men, without shame; in order that we may be owned hereafter by His Son “*before the angels of God.*” Rather than be ashamed of the Saviour whom we love, let Him be our boast. Those who believe not, may not be able to see what delights us; but our delight in His service will not be diminished for that. The smile of His approbation will beam upon us; and that to us will be found more than sufficient to compensate for the abuse of those who despise us, because we love the Saviour whom they hate. Let

us then, brethren, so live, that we may be able to apply the Apostle's language to ourselves, and say, "*for us to live is Christ.*"

But we must now pass on, and notice the next clause in our text, viz. "*to die is gain.*" Would that we all could echo this! Then all our fears of dissolution would vanish. Then all our want of firmness in the service of Christ would be exchanged for boldness and intrepidity. This was the conviction that enabled the early Christians to "take joyfully the spoiling of their [worldly] goods;" to encounter persecutions and enmity; and to go, at the bidding of Cæsar, to fight with wild beasts at the public spectacles. This was the conviction that enabled the worthies of old to endure "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments." This was the conviction which, taking hold of the minds of the primitive Christians, led them to perform those wonderful acts of self-devotion, which convinced the votaries of idol-gods of the truth of the religion of the Blessed Jesus. "Surely powerful must be the aid which such persons receive from their God, when they patiently and in their sound senses endure, rather than deny Him, such tortures as are now for the first time inflicted by one man upon another." Thus, and truly, did the heathen reason concerning their Christian neighbours. And thus reasoning, they were not long before they also forsook Apollo for Christ; "*graven images*" for "*the living and true God.*"

It is a pity that we are obliged to go back to the early days of the Church, for examples of the power of the conviction, that it is "*gain*" for the believer to die. Why

do we not ourselves show, that we are sincere in the belief of the Creed which we constantly profess? Oh that we had such a clear and firm belief of a glorious immortality to come, that we might be able to say, as St. Paul does, "*to die is gain.*"

And yet, brethren, whether the conviction abide with us, or not, it is true, that to the believer "*to die is gain.*" The Christian is now a soldier fighting against his enemies; at death the struggle will be over. He will then be placed beyond the reach of every foe. He will be placed in that fortress, which no hostile power can ever take. The Christian is now often harassed with unhappy doubts as to his own ultimate safety; at death those doubts will be all cleared away; for then shall be realized, in all its glory, what the humble believer could scarcely venture to hope for. And then, too, the Saviour Himself shall appear in all His majesty, seated at the right hand of the Father; and He, from that throne, shall look down, and acknowledge the believer, as one of those whom He died to save.

It is not proper for believers to be dissatisfied with the lot which God has assigned to them on earth. It is their duty to take patiently the adversity which they are called to suffer. And we justly look upon a man as belying his profession, when we see him repining at the cup which has been given him to drink. Yet, it is proper for one, who is wearied with the trials of this life, to look forward to the time when all his trials shall be over. Such a man is allowed, for his present relief, to hope for the time when death shall procure him "*gain.*"

To the eye of sense, "*to die is*" not "*gain*," but loss. Of all things we now can think of, the most gloomy is death. It robs us of all that we now cherish. It bursts asunder, whether we will or no, the most endearing ties that bind us to each other. It uproots the plants which we have planted in a soil of earth ; as it were, rebuking us for our foolishness, in taking that for *fixed*, which was so soon *to be moved*. It mangles, with its iron grasp, those delicate forms which *we* can only caress. But faith says, " Let Death do his worst : to the saint, *to die is gain*." The body may now be laid in dust ; its ashes may be joined to its parent ashes ; the sea may drown,—the fire may burn,—wild beasts may devour the mortal part of the believer : but still to him "*it is gain*!" For then he is brought in spirit before his Redeemer : and that body of his, which now he for a time loses, shall, by the power of Him who first made it, be restored in perfect beauty—and freed from all pain.

" *To die is gain*," said St. Paul. Well he might ! His would be gain in no ordinary sense. For it is written, "*They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever*." He had turned many to righteousness. He had spent many years in sorrows, trials, and perils, in order that he might lead others to the same Saviour whom he had found so precious. He had to stand before the high-priest, and to clear himself from a false accusation ; but see him now wearing the crown of righteousness, while that high-priest is now in that woe which is too painful to be even thought of. St. Paul indeed sorrowed for a season, but he now rejoices for ever. He braved the mockery of the philoso-

phers on the *Hill of Mars*, and pained, no doubt, he was ; but he was upheld by the hope of that immortality, which from his lips they first heard proclaimed. And that hope too it was, that bore him up, in the shipwreck, when all that sailed with him lost heart. And that hope too it was, that sustained him, even when threatened with death by the ruthless tyrant.

He truly was a man of many woes : but in the midst of them all, his hope never deserts him. He is determined to live for Christ ; for he believes that the end of such a life will be endless gain. May God grant such a conviction and such a resolution to us ! He, whose resolution we so much admire, is now experiencing how rich is the *gain* for a saint *to die*. The trials which he endured on earth now no more give him trouble, but rather perhaps add fresh relish to his blissful enjoyments. This idea is encouraged by what we read in the book of Revelation. There we are told, that the angel spoke of those “ that came out of great tribulation.” The sorrows of earth, then, *are* made the subject of commemoration in heaven. And how must the contrast, that will then be made, raise adoration of the Redeemer in the soul of the glorified saint ? Rapture then shall overpower him ! Can it be that he is now never more to have his peace disturbed ? never again to be assailed by Satan ? never again to be scorned by the tongue of the ungodly ? never again to have his sight clouded, but for ever now to view the face of Him, “ in whose presence there is fulness of joy ? ” Yes, the end of the Christian’s sorrows and trials will come. The time, to which unbelievers look forward with dread and horror, is to the believer a time of rejoicing : it is

the time when he *loses* all his troubles, and *gains* all his enjoyments.

This is one source of consolation to those who have been bereaved of such as they hold dear. They are able to look forward to their departure from this world, as the time when they are again to meet those whom they lost for a season. Those who have lived many years on earth, and during their pilgrimage made the acquaintance of many who have gone before them to the mansions of the living, must especially contemplate with comfort the subject brought before us in our text. To them death will be *gain*, in a very important sense. They will then, no doubt, have to bid adieu for a season to a sorrowing circle on earth ; but it will only be to join a far more numerous, and perfectly happy circle, in that place where there is no more pain, no more separation. Happy is the aged believer, who has such a source of comfort to fall back upon, when sometimes he may see a generation springing up around him, who seem to take little interest in his comfort. On such an occasion, he may say to himself, "My friends, truly, are decreasing around me ; but they are only growing the more numerous in that happy home, to which I may soon expect to be invited by the merciful Father of the great *family in heaven and earth*." Such is the solace which God gives to his aged servants. May this be ours, should we ever find it needful !

Grievous was the loss which our race sustained by the fall. Man was made in the image of his Maker. This, we may believe, implies that his soul was pure, and not debased in its imaginations by its union with the body. Since the fall, the body seems to have

become polluted ; to desire for itself such things as are hurtful both to itself and to its immortal associate. Since the fall, that struggle, to which St. Paul alludes in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, has been going on, in every child of Adam. What we know to be wrong, we are impelled, by the evil principle within us, to do ; what we know to be right, the same keeps us back from doing. We see (*e. g.*) the evil effects of anger ; yet we are not enough careful to restrain our temper ;—we all appreciate humility, and count him happy who is adorned with such a grace ; yet we allow ourselves to be lifted up with pride ;—we applaud him who is benevolent and kind to the necessitous ; yet we seem to think that we have ample reason to justify our own penuriousness ;—we all, in our serious moments, revere the man who spends every day in the love and fear of God ; yet our own conduct, if his be right, is very far wrong.

Such is our instability—our indecision—our wavering temper. Against these we have now to struggle continually. No day are we safe, unless we are struggling ; for our very natures are in-wrought with backwardness to what is good for us,—good for us *now*, and good for us *for ever*. But, one thing is comforting to us ; that this conflict will not always last. The time draws nigh when this unhappy contest shall cease ; when we shall be retarded in our pursuit of that which is good by no unmanageable drawback. Then shall we be delivered “ *from the body of this death.* ” All our imperfections and all our waywardness shall be buried with our mortal part in the tomb, and thence it shall never rise ;—for when these vile bodies shall rise again, they “ *shall be*

like unto Christ's glorious body." In this way it is that we can say with St. Paul, "*for us to die is gain.*"

My dear Christian brethren, are we desirous of always so living, with our hearts set on heavenly things, that we may consider it our gain to die? It is certainly impossible for us so to think, if our greatest, most relished enjoyments be earthly. If we cannot contemplate the end of this present life as that which is to be *gainful* to us, there is reason to fear that our hearts are not where they should be. If we look for a "treasure" in heaven, there "let our hearts be also." If we believe that our Lord and Saviour hath gone to heaven to "prepare a dwelling-place" for us in His Father's house, we may well be able to serve him here without anxiety and without fear, with diligence and with delight. His commandments will not be grievous to us. Contrary, indeed, they will be found to our carnal nature; but He who hath called us to be His soldiers, will give us courage to fight; and as we have the certain promise of victory, we care not how hard may be the conflict. Toilsome and severe it may be; but the end will be peace, and "*a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*"

LECTURE VI.

PHILIPPIANS I. 22—26.

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour : yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better : Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith ; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.

IN the first of these verses there is so much obscurity of expression, that it is difficult to see what is the exact meaning of the Apostle. Our translators themselves seem to have found the verse difficult, and therefore they have left it in the same ambiguity in which it is found in the original.

I will not enter upon all the various meanings which might be given to these clauses, nor show how one might be supported with greater probability than another, as such a critical disquisition would be very uninteresting to most of my hearers ; but I desire merely

to lay before you, as briefly as I can, the result of my own inquiries into the matter in hand.

I find, then, that the most satisfactory meaning of the 22nd verse is that given to it by the Syriac version, the very first version that was made of the *New Testament*, and worthy of the greatest deference, as it must have appeared during the life-time of many of those who had been instructed by the Apostles themselves—if not even before St. John was called to his eternal rest.

In this most ancient version, the 22nd verse is connected with the preceding verse in the following manner :—

“ *For me to live* (literally, *the life of me*) is Christ ; and if I die there is gain to me : but if even in this life of the flesh there are to me fruits of my labours, I know not which I should choose for myself.” Thus the next verse will come in naturally in this sense—“ Thus I am in difficulty about choosing between the two, (*viz.* life and death) having a desire to depart, &c.”

The *fruit of his labour* that the apostle mentions, means, according to the import of that Bible expression, the advantage or usefulness of his labour. This apostle had given himself from the moment of his conversion to the service of his Lord. When he said—“ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” he showed the readiness of his mind to make a complete surrender of himself to the will of God. The speech of the ungodly and the worldly man runs thus ;—“ Who is the Lord that I should obey him ? My tongue, my hands, and my feet are my own : I will do with them just as I please.” Far different is the speech of the man whom God has turned to Himself. He says,—“ I am not my

own ; for I have been bought with a price,—even the precious blood of God's dear Son ; therefore it is my earnest desire, and daily prayer, to be enabled to glorify God in my body and spirit, which are God's.' So it happens, that while the ungodly lives to himself, lives for his own pleasure—which alas ! is very often found in the way of sin,—the believer lives for the promotion of God's work in the earth, for the increase of his own sanctification, for the rendering himself more meet for the inheritance of the saints, and for advancing the present and future well-being of his fellow-men.

It is not in vain that God detains his people on earth, after they have turned from their sins to seek His face. Their after-life here below is expected to be spent in seeking to undo some of the evil which they did in the world before their conversion. Instead of their former selfishness, they are now to show forth an extensive charity to all men ; instead of their former strife and envy, they are now to abound in meekness and generous liberality of soul ; instead of their former slandering and evil-speaking, they are now to be charitable in their judgments, and tender in the representations which they make of the character of all men ; instead of their former negligence of their own morals, they are now to be circumspect, and careful lest they pollute the fair garment with which their Saviour hath arrayed them, when He justified them from the guilt of all their past sins ; and instead of their former wilfulness and contempt of the authority of God, they are now resolved *in all their ways to acknowledge Him, that He may direct their paths.*

Such a change as this cannot pass upon a man without rendering him a very different member of society. And whether he is rich or poor, whether he be in a public office or a private station, he cannot fail to exercise an influence for the good of the community. It is doubtless to this that our Lord refers, when, addressing His disciples, he says—“*Ye are the salt of the earth.*” Since the beginning of the world, there have ever been the two classes of mankind,—the righteous, and the wicked. And it is in pity to the latter that the former are left to inhabit the same world with them. Our Lord’s expression would seem to intimate that the earth and its wicked inhabitants would go to corruption, were it not for the conservative power of the few righteous who are scattered over it in different parts.

This, then, is the high honour that is put upon the saints on earth. They are co-workers with God; they are co-intercessors with the Redeemer, beseeching God day and night to spare those who have no pity on themselves, and to turn their hearts; and they are witnesses for God, to testify to their fellow-men of His goodness, justice, and truth. In this capacity they have many difficult duties and labours to perform,—such duties as they by nature are not inclined to, and such labours as by nature they have no strength to accomplish. Therefore God hath condescended to “work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” He hath made His grace sufficient for them, and perfected His strength in their weakness. He hath even to their own astonishment endowed them with gifts which they had not before, and led them boldly to encounter ar-

duous deeds which they deemed themselves far too cowardly ever to face.

If this representation be true, need we wonder at St. Paul saying in our text, that there is "*fruit*" to his Christian labours even in this life. If all Christians are employed in the promotion of God's glory, how much more must that glory be set forward by the labours of the untiring and highly-gifted Apostle?

It would be wrong to pass from this part of our text without inviting you to think with myself—how little the conduct of modern Christians agrees with the description which we have now drawn from the Scriptures. To all who are in earnest in the profession of Christianity, and sincere in the service of the Lord, it is matter of grief and sorrow, that so much time, labour, and wealth are expended, even by professing Christians, in such a way as does not promote, but rather hinder the real well-being of man. Oh that Christians did but reflect, how much dishonour they bring to their profession, when they live, and act, and amuse themselves, not like pilgrims and strangers upon the earth, but like those who have no higher portion to look to than what earth can give!

The apostle says he has difficulty in choosing between life and death, because he has the "*desire to depart and to be with Christ*," while at the same time it would be more for the advantage of the Philippians, that he should live a little longer in the flesh. See the disinterestedness of this Holy Apostle! He had obtained the assurance that to depart this life, and to be with Christ, were to him one and the same thing; and yet he is contented to postpone this heavenly felicity to the

good of his friends, whom he had been instrumental in turning to the Lord? This was true charity; this was truly unselfish love; this was even a nobler part than it would have been to lay down his life for his brethren. What power must such love as this have given the great Apostle over the minds of those Christians whom he instructed, and to whom he declared the will of the Lord. Is it any thing to be wondered at, that when we find such a man as this leaving a people, among whom he had spent three years preaching the kingdom of God, such a touching scene should be presented as is described in these words:—“*And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more?*” (Vide Acts XX.)

With such a power of love as this apostle possessed, can we be at a loss to understand the cause of his great success in preaching the gospel, and founding Churches in nearly all parts of Asia Minor, Greece, and the Archipelago?

Perhaps some one might be disposed to ask, Whether all Christians were expected to have the same views of life and death as St. Paul had? And a very worldly-minded Christian might wonder, why the apostle should have at all hesitated to prefer life to death. This is a question which it is not very easy to answer. What have we to guide us herein, but the example of the saints, as recorded in Holy Writ? Now it so happens, that we there find some praying for a long life, as a good and desirable thing. When Paul wrote as he did

in the text, he was in very critical circumstances; he was shortly to be brought before the cruel emperor Nero, to be tried for the supposed offence of saying "*there was another king, one Jesus.*" The issue of this trial might be, his condemnation to suffer the death of a martyr. The possibility of being soon called to give up his life was thus brought clearly before his mind. And, doubtless, He who had given him so many other Christian graces, did not withhold this one, then so much needed, of looking without fear to the approach of death.

It would perhaps be wrong to lay down any general rule, and say that no Christian can be in a proper state who is not able to contemplate death coming to him without dread or doubt. We may therefore believe that while there are some believers who can calmly, and even joyfully, meditate on their latter end, as a thing which may any moment from this take place, there are yet others who are not so far advanced in Christian perfection, who may nevertheless be very diligent in their daily life, seeking to approve themselves to their God and Saviour. It would not be saying more than Scripture authorizes us to say, that God proportions our qualifications to our circumstances and our duties. Hear the words of inspiration on this subject:—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) "*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.*" (Isaiah xliii. 2, 3.) "*No trial hath overtaken you, but such as is within the power of man,*

(ἀνθρώπων) *and God is faithful (or trust-worthy), who will not suffer you to be tried above that ye are able, but will with the trial also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" (1 Cor. x. 13.) Thus it is, that God proportions the graces of his people to their necessities. On His Blessed Son He bestowed the Holy Spirit "*not by measure,*" but abundantly; but on His people in general He hath dealt out His gifts and talents according to the measure in which He hath seen it needful to bestow them. Even in the government of the irrational and inanimate creation, we have abundant cause to admire the wisdom of the Almighty, in adapting the bestowal of His gifts to the necessity that calls for them. Thus in tropical regions, where there is great heat and much drought, there are showered down from heaven copious and abundant rains; and in those parts of the world which would otherwise be so sultry as to be uninhabitable, the wise Director of the Universe hath ordered that the wind shall prevail more than in other parts. Again, in those regions where rain for a long season at once does not water the ground, God hath provided the trees with abundance of large leaves, whereby they suck in from the atmosphere the moisture which they require for their nourishment. If we were to meditate on the animal creation, the instances of God's adapting the gift to the necessity would be endless. The same God then who rules in the kingdom of grace, rules also in the kingdom of nature. What we do not require, God does not bestow. From this we may see that it is not to be expected that we should have the courage of the martyrs, until we are called to yield our lives, as

they did, in witnessing to the truth and value of the gospel.

But although we are thus to fall behind the apostle in the calm undaunted courage with which we view death, yet I cannot see how we should desire to live in the flesh for a different reason from that for which St. Paul wished to live, *viz.* to be useful to his fellow-men. If we wish to live, merely that we may enjoy such pleasures as are common to the brute creation, we are certainly very far from the possession of a sanctified or renewed heart. The object which we shall aim at, if we are actuated by the spirit of a Christian, will be—the fitting of ourselves and others for the glory of the heavenly world. The apostle was himself, when he wrote the words of our text, ripe for that glory; and therefore, his only reason for wishing to live longer in the world was “*the furtherance of the joy and faith*” of his brethren. But we, who in the Christian pilgrimage are far behind the apostle (if indeed any of us have yet begun that pilgrimage,) have first to make our own calling and election sure, and then to lend our aid like him to the needy of our brethren. What a view of the object of living in the world is now presented to us! And how different is this from that by which most of us are actuated! Do we not suffer even the gifts of God, which we now enjoy, to blind our eyes to the glorious Giver? Do we not permit the duties necessary to our life in the flesh to engross our attention, so as to be unable to make provision for the life of the immortal spirit that never ends? Do we not almost suffocate the heavenly spark within us, by the rubbish of earth in which we entangle ourselves? Are

we not guilty of spiritual murder, by leading our fellow-men to follow an example of neglecting duty, and forgetting God? Are we not doing them an incalculable injury, when we teach them, by our daily practice, that the only things that are worthy of being earnestly pursued are those that perish with the using? And oh! how ought we to be ashamed and confounded before God, if we have ever been the means of turning from God, and life eternal, any who have set their hearts to seek Him, and to enquire seriously what they must do to be saved! Even in the place of woe, as we learn from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, there is anxiety felt for those who are living in sin in this world. "*Send Lazarus to my father's house,*" exclaims Dives; *for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*" O shall we be less anxious about our own and our fellow-men's salvation, than the very hopeless ones who have been driven away in their wickedness! Be this far from us! Rather let us all and each do as much as in us lies, that ourselves, and our friends, and our neighbours, and the whole human race may know and believe the blessed Gospel, which announces life eternal through faith in *Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

I beg now to call your attention to the manner in which the apostle speaks of death. He calls it a *departing*, or setting out upon a journey. Thus the truth of man's existence after death is kept before our minds. It is pleasing to observe how well this truth is kept in view throughout the language of Scripture. We read of the ancients being "*gathered to their fathers,*" and "*sleeping with their fathers.*" It is said again of the



righteous, "*He shall enter into peace ; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.*" Daniel speaks of those "*who sleep in the dust of the earth.*" In the New Testament, those who die are said to "*sleep in Jesus,*" to "*fall asleep,*" to "*yield up the (ghost, or) spirit,*" to "*depart,*" to be "*absent from the body,*" to "*put off this tabernacle,*" and "*to rest from their labours.*" Surely such language as this is more to be approved than the half-infidel expressions which we sometimes hear ; such as—"He is no more :—" "They perished in shipwreck :—" "She has lost her child." This phraseology grates upon the ear of a believer, more than a discordant sound offends a musician. He shudders and trembles at any words which seem to imply any doubt or oblivion of the state of glory, reserved for the saints after this life is ended. The doctrine of the soul's immortality is a most precious and a most consoling one ; indeed, without this cheering doctrine to support him, the mind of a reflecting and thoughtful man could scarcely for a moment retain its sanity. How careful, then, should we be, to use always Scriptural language when speaking of death ! Let us never, by an improper expression, convey a notion contrary to the truth as it is revealed. By word, as well as by thought, let us hold to the blessed and joyful hope of everlasting life, whereon we are to enter when we depart from this present life. And oh ! since we all know that we must sooner or later *depart* this life, let us be diligent to be found prepared for that departure ! Whenever the summons shall come, we need not tremble, if only we be found ready for it. Even into the dark valley of the shadow of death we

shall not be afraid to go, if we have the assurance that the Lord will be "*with us, and that His rod and staff will conduct us in comfort.*"

Next, permit me to observe, that the apostle in our text teaches a doctrine very different from the opinion which you will sometimes find advocated in theological books, and zealously maintained in the present day by those who glory in the name of *Catholic*. The false opinion to which I refer is "that the souls of the righteous at death do not go to heaven, but remain in a place called Hades till the resurrection." I may mention, that this opinion is professedly derived from the writings of some of the ancient Fathers, and its maintainers think those who do not hold it as they, to be chargeable with heresy. We do not refuse deference to the ancient fathers, when we think it is due; but when we find them at variance with the inspired writers, we do not long hesitate as to who shall be our guides.

We believe then—"that the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls." (*Larger Catechism, Ans. 86.*) Now should any one wish for the proof of this, we would at once refer him to the words of our text, in which St. Paul joins together the *departing* from this life, and *the being with Christ.*"

Of this then we are sure, that when Paul died, he was taken *to be with Christ*, in some sense or other. Now as Paul did not expect to be translated to heaven with his body immediately after dying, as our Lord's body ascended, so we may conclude that it was his soul only that was taken *to be with the Lord*, while his flesh did rest in the grave, waiting the glorious resurrection. Again, if St. Paul's soul at its departure from the body was to be *with the Lord*, so we may conclude that it was taken to heaven. For where is Christ? Whither did our Lord ascend? Is He not in heaven? Hath He not ascended to "*the right hand of God*," where He is to sit "*until all His enemies be made His footstool*?" But if any one should say, as sometimes it is said, "It may be granted, that the soul of such a saint as St. Paul was taken to heaven immediately after death, and yet it may be true that the souls of inferior believers are kept in Hades till the resurrection." To this we reply, that such a distinction between the saints and inferior believers is a groundless and gratuitous assumption, authorized nowhere but in the erroneous teaching on which the system of popery is built: it is not found in Scripture, but in the works of the more recent Greek and Latin doctors, called *fathers*. Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, receives the Spirit of adoption, is regenerated, and sanctified, and so entitled to be called a *saint*. And that such *saints* or *believers* are all, in common with St. Paul, to be with Christ immediately when they die, may be easily seen by reading the following passage in 2 Cor. v. 1—4: "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an*

house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And verses 6—8, "*We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight :) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*" No proof could be stronger than this passage affords, that all believers, whatever their rank in spiritual standing, are, when they leave the body, to be present with the Lord Jesus Christ, where Paul at his departure expected to go. For this passage, mark you, was addressed to the believers at Corinth, who certainly did not occupy a high place in the spiritual scale. Let us then guard our minds from being influenced by popish doctrines on this subject; and comfort ourselves with the joyful assurance which the apostle gives the believer, that, when we leave the body, our souls shall be *present with the Lord*, to behold His glory, and to partake in the song of the redeemed, and to enjoy the care of the Heavenly Shepherd, who shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters, and then God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Paul's only reason for wishing to live longer in the flesh was, that he might further the joy, and confirm the faith of his brethren the Philippians. Ministers of Christ in our time are not gifted as he was, either with

the power of working miracles to confirm the faith of the Gospel, or with the ability to reveal Divine Truth for the consolation of those whom they address. Yet it is their privilege to bring forth, from the treasury of God's Word already written and complete, such truths as may both convey useful instruction and needful consolation. And if they are faithful in the discharge of their duty, and earnest about its success, they also may, with St. Paul, view as the only two things to be chosen,—to depart and be with Christ, or to remain longer in the flesh, that they may be useful to those “*over whom the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers.*” Let ministers be anxious for the eternal good of their people, as St. Paul was ; and let the people be careful not to frustrate their minister's endeavours : and then we may hope that all shall rejoice together in the day of the Lord Jesus !

LECTURE VII.

PHILIPPIANS I. 27—30.

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel ; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries : which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

THIS passage is in close connection with the verses which we considered in the last lecture. It forms a natural conclusion to the subject handled from the 20th to the 26th verse, *viz.* the manner in which the death or longer life of St. Paul would affect his friends the Philippians. He tells us, that, so far as he was concerned, it seemed far better for him to depart this life and to be with Christ,—but that it would be for their advantage that he should continue to live longer in the flesh. Whether God had then appointed more days for him on earth, or

not, was a matter not revealed to him, and therefore not known, until he should see how it would go with him in the trial before Nero. But of this he was sure, that if God did continue him any longer in the world, it would be for the furtherance of their joy and for the confirmation of their faith: and that if he did ever again visit them at Philippi, their rejoicing would be, through him, more abundant in Christ Jesus. "As, however, both my longer stay on earth, and my return to Philippi, are doubtful matters, it is my duty in the meantime to prepare you for whatever may happen, and the "*only*" thing which I have to do in order to this is to exhort you to *let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*" Such in my view is the train of thought which was in the Apostle's mind, when he wrote these verses.

How striking and comprehensive are those words of the Apostle, "*Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel!*" If your conversation be thus in accordance with the gospel, I know that all shall go right with you. You will then go on comfortably in the way to heaven, independently of my presence among you, and independently of my instruction.

You who are well-skilled in your Bibles know that the word *conversation* here does not mean merely our communication by speech with one another; you know that here, as elsewhere in the Bible, the word rather means *our whole conduct as social beings, our entire behaviour*, whether as it respects God, ourselves, or our fellow-creatures.

In the exhortation of the apostle thus explained, we have a precept of very wide application. And it would

not be improper to say, that there is no conceivable condition in which a Christian can be placed, in which he would not find this precept useful to him. If a Christian once forgets this, and acts without regard to what he has been taught in the gospel, that moment he becomes a back-slider, and withdraws himself from the sunshine of the Divine favour. And before he can again enjoy peace, and a sense of pardon, he must renew his former sorrows of repentance, and plead anew for mercy and forgiveness through the merits of a Redeemer, who gave His life for us.

When the apostle wrote the precept in our text, "Let your whole behaviour be as it becometh the *gospel*,"—he doubtless referred to the account which he gave the Philippians, while yet among them, of the life, doctrine, and atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ; and of the moral conduct which was expected of those, who profess to be Christ's disciples. It would be wrong, and contrary to the necessary rules of interpreting Scripture, to suppose the Apostle to mean here—"Behave in accordance with the *Gospel*, and you are safe, although you have no regard to the law of Moses." The truth is, there is here no contrast intended between the *Law* and the *Gospel*; but on the contrary the apostle uses the word *Gospel* in the extensive sense, in which the *law of Moses*, at least so far as it is moral, will form a part of the gospel. For you will see, from numerous texts of the New Testament, that the word gospel is taken to signify the whole doctrine taught by those who went forth as the ministers of Christ, to "*testify both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord*

Jesus Christ." We may suppose that Christ's first ministers were faithful in representing, wherever they went, the true nature of our Blessed Lord's teaching. Now the object of that teaching was not to lead men to despise the moral law, as God made it known "by the hand of Moses," but rather to inspire men with a reverence for that law. He was so far from teaching men to condemn that law, that he spent much of his time in vindicating it from the discredit into which it had been brought by the miserable management of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were its expounders among the Jews.

The precept of the apostle, then, in our text, must be equivalent to this—"Whatever ye have heard from me, O Philippians, concerning the religion which the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to institute, that ye are to look upon as the standard and rule by which your whole behaviour is to be regulated and governed."

I have now, brethren, explained the words of the apostle. But my duty here is not yet done. It is indeed an important part of a minister's duty to unfold the true meaning of Scripture, to use his endeavours that the people committed to his charge be well-instructed in the doctrines of the Christian religion, and to be pleased when he sees those endeavours successful. But he has a higher and more imperative duty to perform still, before he can satisfy his own conscience, and approve himself to the Divine Master whom he serves. He has to see that his people faithfully live according to the extent of their knowledge; and, if they do not, it is his part to administer remonstrance and warning. Permit me, then, a few moments to apply the exhortation of the apostle to ourselves.

If we were to compare our lives with the *gospel*, what should we discover? Would there be an agreement, or a contrariety? One part of the *gospel* says, "*Be ye holy, for I (the Lord your God) am holy :*" Where then is our holiness, or even our endeavour to be holy? Let every one now present seriously and solemnly ask himself, "Is it my daily desire and prayer to be made like unto God, by becoming holy and free from sin? Is it my daily endeavour to put off the old man, which is corrupt, with his deeds and lusts, and to put on the new man, "which is created in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of his Creator?" Do I not rather sometimes forget the obligations under which my vows of baptism have laid me? Do I not live often as if I had no God to please, and no Divine Master to serve, as if His eye were not ever upon me, as if He were not to call me before his judgment-seat? Do I not seem as if I neither loved nor feared Him who hath shown so much favour to me, and who is able also to visit me with the heaviest tokens of his wrath? Alas! who is there that must not give an unfavourable answer to these questions?

Again, another part of the *gospel* says, "*Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds ?*" Elsewhere it is said, "*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" Now then wherein is it that our conduct differs from those who are called in the Bible *the world*, i. e. those who have no portion but in this world? Would our conduct be much different from what it now is, if we had never heard the *gospel* at all? Is it not the world, rather than the Father, that engrosses the greater

part of our affections? Are not our most relished enjoyments those connected with the world? Do we not strive with all our might, as much as possible, to make ourselves like, and conform ourselves to the world?

Again, the Gospel represents our present state as a passage through a wilderness; "*Here*," saith the apostle, "*we have no continuing city*, but we seek one to come." I beseech you, as *strangers and pilgrims*, do so and so, saith another apostle. Where then are the marks of our being travellers and pilgrims? Do we not rather raise to ourselves houses, and purchase to ourselves lands, which, as the prophet speaks, "we call by our own names?" Thus acting, as if we were always to continue in this present world, and being forgetful of "that building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do we not sorrow and complain, "as if some strange thing happened to us," when we find the way we have to tread rough, and the obstacles we have to encounter difficult to surmount? Do we not indeed so get ourselves entangled with the things on either side of our way, that the onward progress is quite arrested, so that we seem to be not pilgrims travelling through the wilderness, but colonists determined to settle in those pleasant parts which we have discovered in it? If all our happiness depends on the comforts which the earth affords; if we have no pleasures but those which arise from the objects of our bodily senses; if we are all life and animation when about to enter upon worldly business, and dead and languid ever when we engage in religious duties;—let us be assured, that the application to us of the epithets

“strangers and pilgrims” would be the greatest mockery and disgrace with which it would be possible to insult us.

Again, the Gospel enjoins upon us that new commandment, “*love one another.*” Now, let us ask ourselves, How does our behaviour agree with this? If the Gospel, which we profess to believe, had taught us to be harsh in judging of each other, to bear long in remembrance injuries mutually done, to treasure up in our memories every proof of another’s failings, to be on the watch for a brother’s fall, to build our own success on another’s ruin, to grieve when another prospers as well as we,—we could hardly deal and behave differently from the way in which many professing Christians conduct themselves. O let our hearts be once touched with the love of Christ to our own souls, let us think of His giving His life a ransom to liberate us from the bondage of sin, and make us the free children of His Father,—and then shall we be so melted with love to Him, that we shall be ready to embrace in the arms of our charity all who have been adopted with us into His blessed and happy family! Once let us love Him that begat us with His ever-living and ever-fruitful word, and then shall we love them who are begotten of Him, though they, as we, may have their failings and their short comings! If, brethren, we feel discontented with our past conduct, and would now desire to live more worthily of the Gospel of Christ than we have ever yet done, there is one way of accomplishing this amendment which I would commend to your serious consideration. I would ask of you, first to make yourselves fully acquainted with what the gospel is, and what conduct it enjoins; to learn how the Lord Jesus Christ

lived, and what spirit He exhibited ; and then take this gospel-knowledge with you wheresoever you go, and keep it before your mind at all times, in whatever work you engage in. Bear in mind that the Master whom ye profess to serve is ever present with you : interrupt yourselves, then, from time to time with this question, 'How do I appear to Christ my Saviour now?' If we behaved in this way, there is reason to believe that our conduct would turn out a very different thing to what it is. Much that we now do would be left undone ; many binding duties that are now neglected would be performed ; and even the little good that we do attempt would be done in a better spirit. I pray you, brethren, do not consider me unduly censorious, or unreasonably severe in what I have now said with reference to the duty of Christians, to live and act worthily of the Gospel which they profess. Be assured, we cannot enjoy happiness in the present life, nor blessedness in the life to come, unless we resolve to be decidedly consistent in our Christian profession ; for if we have not so firm a hold of the gospel, and so sure a belief in the truth of what it promises to us, as to make us anxious to bring our lives to a conformity therewith, there is no doubt that we are those of who are "dead," while they "have a name to live," who are hollow hypocrites, and not sincere disciples of Christ, and who at last, if they repent not, will be disowned by the Lord the Judge saying to them, even when producing their proofs that they knew him, "*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, for I never knew you !*" May God, in His mercy, make us now all alive to the importance and necessity of seeking His face with a true heart, and with all dili-

gent care and earnestness, so that none of us may be found at our latter end obnoxious to the doom of them who have no more of religion than its outward show,—who have “the form of godliness, but deny the power of it!”

We said, the apostle considered it a certainty that all would go right with his friends at Philippi, provided they only conducted themselves worthily of the gospel of Christ. If they did this, he says, he knew that, whether he came among them and saw them, or was absent and heard of them, he would have the satisfaction of learning, “*that they stood fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*” From this we are taught a very important truth, *viz.* that the more consistently we live as Christians, the more united shall we be with each other, and the more diligent in our endeavours for the extension of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. And, on the other hand, we may easily learn that, if we are divided in affection from each other by wrangling and contention, and careless whether the faith of the gospel, *i. e.* the blessed news of salvation through Christ, be promoted in the world or not,—then such an unhappy state of things has been brought about by our first being careless as to whether our own conduct was “*worthy of the Gospel of Christ.*”

It seems, the apostle had learned, before writing this epistle, that the Philippians had been called to suffer persecution. For you observe he makes mention in our text, *v.* 28, of their “adversaries,” and *v.* 29, their “suffering for Christ’s sake,” and *v.* 30, of their “having the same conflict” that he himself had, both

while with them at Philippi, and afterwards at Rome. In these circumstances the apostle considered it necessary to fortify their minds : and how does he set about it ? He tells them to lay aside all fear—and not show themselves cowards : “be in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” Stand firm and stedfast in your profession. They cannot hurt you. The utmost cruelty which they can inflict, cannot deprive you of the blessings which the gospel has procured for you ; for the “faith” by which your conduct is governed, the gospel, which ye have “believed,” promises to you “salvation ;” and to them threatens “perdition.” If they kept this in mind, they would be prepared for suffering persecution in a spirit and temper which would be pleasing and acceptable to God. For in regard to themselves they had nothing to disturb their peace, as they saw “salvation, and that from God,” held out clearly before their eyes, as the end of all their sufferings and all their conflicts : and in regard to their enemies, they would be preserved from the sin of indulging angry feelings against them, and also led to pray for them, as they saw that the end of their temporary victory and tyranny was to be “perdition” and eternal discomfiture.

This contrast between the effects of the gospel on them that believe it, and them that reject it, is made by St. Paul in two other places. In 2 Corinthians ii. 14—16, he says, “Thanks be to God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, *in them that are saved, and in them that perish : to the one we are the savour of death unto death ; and to the other the*

savour of life unto life." Again, in 2 Thessal. i. 6, 7, he says, "It is a righteous thing with God, to recompence to them that trouble you *tribulation*; and to you who are troubled, *rest* with us. . when (v. 8 and 10) the Lord Jesus Christ shall take *vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel*. . . and come to be glorified in his saints, and *admired in all them that believe.*" Now my reason for bringing these two passages side by side with the words of our text under consideration is, to remark, concerning them all, that we ought not to consider the apostle, when writing them, as influenced by any uncharitable rejoicing at the miserable doom which the Lord hath appointed for the ungodly and unbelieving. Surely, we cannot fairly accuse St. Paul of lack of pity for the souls of perishing sinners. What but a desire to bring men to the Saviour, and "*turn them from the power of Satan unto God,*" led him to undergo all the hardships which he encountered, after his conversion on the way to Damascus. Let us not suppose that he contemplates without pity and sorrow, what is to be the end of the unbelieving. He expresses his ardent feelings in regard to this matter, when he says—"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Why, then, it may be asked, does the apostle contrast, as in our text and the other two passages quoted, the end of the ungodly with that of the saints, with the express design of giving to the latter either comfort or encouragement? We answer, not certainly that he himself had any pleasure, or wished other saints to find any pleasure, in thinking of the

doom of the ungodly ; but rather that he felt delight at the contemplation of the eternal felicity and freedom from suffering, on which he and all other saints should enter, when all persecutors should be driven to the perdition and destruction, from which the apostle and all other saints were themselves delivered only by believing the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. The apostle was not ignorant, how it was that he was "made to differ" from an unbeliever. It would, then, be unsuitable for him to rejoice, or lead others to rejoice, over the expected misery of those that persecuted them. Let us therefore view him as merely delighting in the ultimate felicity of them that are persecuted for the sake of Christ, enhanced as it is by the contrast with the misery which the despisers of the gospel must for ever endure. To illustrate what I mean, I would ask, may we not very innocently feel grateful to God that we are safe on land, at a time when we see some of our fellow-creatures exposed on sea to the perils of shipwreck in a storm ? And may we not also innocently feel happy that we are in the enjoyment of plenty, when we hear of thousands of our fellow-creatures pining away by famine ? Here the gratitude and the happiness arise, not from viewing or hearing of the calamities of others, but from knowing the superiority of our condition to theirs. Thus may a Christian feel happy when thinking on the contrast between the end of a saint and that of an unbeliever.

Observe now, in the 29th verse, what a remarkable expression occurs : "*Unto you it is given, not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.*" Would not most people consider it better to enjoy the

quiet exercise of godliness, than to be exposed to the violence of persecution? But here, you observe, the apostle views the matter differently. He considers the "suffering for Christ's sake" a greater honour, than simply believing in him, and living a pious life in peace and security. And herein he agrees with our Blessed Lord, who said to His disciples,—“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad : *for great is your reward in heaven.*” These latter words seem to give the reason why it is made a great privilege by St. Paul to suffer for Christ's sake. God will raise to high honour in the kingdom of glory those who have been here called to bear testimony to His truth at the peril of their lives. To the saints at Philadelphia our Lord is represented in the Book of Revelation as saying—“Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. . Therefore I will make (thy persecutors) to come and bow before thee, and to know that I have loved thee. . Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God ; and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of God.” St. Paul also says in another place, (2 Tim. ii. 12) “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” And again—(Rom. viii. 17, 18) “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

Such then was the encouragement held out to the early Christians, and indeed to all Christians who

should ever be placed in their circumstances, to stand fast in the profession of the gospel, even at the expense of bodily suffering and temporal death. Now, although it is an honour to suffer for Christ, and in consequence of believing in him, yet we ought not wantonly to provoke evil men to rise up against us. Voluntary martyrdom can never be acceptable to God; and they who wantonly run into trouble, as they think, for the honour of Christ, are guilty of as great folly as a man would be, who should, although no soldier, rush unarmed into the front of the battle. But although we may not have now the same conflict of persecution to maintain as the ancient Christians, yet it is true that we are all called to engage in a fight. Woe be to us! if we are not fighting. For we are all beset with enemies—and if we submit to them without opposition, we may indeed thereby escape temporary annoyance, but dreadful will be our portion at the last! Let us therefore manfully fight under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil,—and then we also shall be raised at last to reign with Him who is the Captain of our salvation, who was tempted and encountered, but overcame and triumphed.

LECTURE VIII.

PHILIPPIANS II. 1—4.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

I have heard it said, that it is difficult to follow the apostle Paul, in his progress from one part of his epistle to another. He has been complained of as obscure and unintelligible. He has been found fault with as writing without connection. It has been said that a “therefore” occurs where there is no consequence, a “that” when no object is stated, and a “because” where no cause is assigned.

For my part I firmly believe, that St. Paul *was led* by the Holy Spirit when writing his epistles, as well as in delivering his discourses, *into all the truth*. I therefore cannot believe that there can be any imperfection

in the statement of Divine truth as made by him. If to me the statement ever seem imperfect, I attribute it to my own inability to grasp the fulness of meaning which the Holy Spirit hath imparted to the words and language of the favoured men who were made his spokesmen and penmen to the Church in all ages.

Difficult as many passages of St. Paul's epistles must be acknowledged to be, and hard as it often is to make out the connexion between one sentence or passage and another, this we must admit, that his writings abound with the most simple, practical directions, the most heart-touching appeals in regard to our duty to God and our duty to one another.

The most accomplished theologian, after a long life of patient study, may have to confess his doubtfulness in regard to the real object and bearing of much of what St. Paul has been commissioned to write; yet such is the plainness and clearness of the greater part, that the most ordinary Christian man delights to peruse it, to read it again and again, and to take it home to his own heart and conscience.

The verses which I have just read are a fair specimen of the style which we have been speaking of. The apostle, when he wrote them, seems to have been full of emotion. He has heaped together in close contact a multitude of beautiful images. Every one of these is complete in itself, and strikes as soon as it appears: but the link which binds one to another is not so easily perceptible.

Let us see, however, what are the things which the holy apostle in his rapture brings before us. He makes a supposition, "*if there be.*" He does not express a doubt.

The same use of "*if*" is made, as in that saying of our Lord's—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." This supposition is made in regard to the Philippians. The apostle means to say, "*If there be to you any consolation in Christ,*" and so on.

But we must attend to what those things were which the apostle supposed, or took for granted, to be possessed by the Christians at Philippi. And the first of these was *consolation in Christ*. Truly man is a being who stands in need of consolation. He is the child of many sorrows. He is born to trouble, "as the sparks fly upward." Trouble is natural to him. He cannot spend a day without some of it. His happiest hours are not undisturbed by it. The most joyful occasions of his life are not exempt from it. This is the fruit of sin. The natural heart of man hath gone astray from God and from duty, and hence its pain. It is in pursuit of something to satisfy it: it is making its search in a wrong direction;—and so it is unsuccessful. No wonder that it feels unhappy. Would that every heart so gone astray felt more so: the consolation would the more readily, the more anxiously be sought after. This consolation is offered freely to all. It is not the will of a merciful God that any of His rational creatures should be destitute of this consolation. His invitation is most extensive—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

If man will cease to be miserable, if he desire *consolation*, he may have it,—God offers it to him. Thou who art sad, think how kind your Father in heaven is to you. He sees you mourning over your sins, and says, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” “I will remember them no more at all for ever. I will cast them all into the depth of the sea.” Surely this is enough to cheer us. If we are cleared of guilt in the sight of our God, if even the eye that is all-seeing shall cease to behold our demerits,—we may well take to ourselves *consolation*. For the chief cause of our grief has been, that we were vile sinners, that we were running away from our God, that we were walking in the way to perdition. But now all this evil has been done away. Our disease has been cured. The burden has been taken from our consciences, and now they are light. Our souls have been liberated from the bondage in which they were enthralled, and now they bound forth towards our great Deliverer. We are blessed in the thought, that, whereas He who hath almighty power was before dreaded for the vengeance due to us, now He is loved and looked up to as our reconciled Father. We thus enjoy *consolation*. We have nothing to fear as regards punishment due for sin—that has been all done away. We tremble no more at the thought of appearing at the tribunal of eternal justice; for the Judge hath already declared Himself on our side. We now think of the welcome which He will give us, when we leave this world to enter His glorious kingdom. This is the hope that consoles us. There is much, we know, to dispirit us, while we are on earth; but in the midst of our sorrows, there will beam forth the rays of

Divine consolation : “*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*” You will observe that the consolation is said to be “*in Christ.*” It is for those only who have faith in Him—who have put their trust in Him, as all their salvation and all their desire. To those who have no faith in Christ, but despise His gracious call, and reject His merciful counsel towards them,—there is no consolation ; but rather “tribulation” now, and “anguish” at a future day.

Next we come to the words “*any comfort of love.*” “Love” in this expression, as I believe, means the affection which one Christian has towards another. No sooner is love to God implanted in the soul, than there arises a regard for all who are the children of God. “Whosoever loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him.” This saying is found to be true every where, and at all times. Among the Jews in the days of the Apostles, how plainly did this love show itself ! All who held the message of love which the Blessed Saviour delivered, were bound to each other through trouble and persecution, and all the violence which the bigotry of the Jewish Rulers could excite. Among the Greeks, the belief of the Gospel introduced in this respect quite a new element. They had “love” of one kind among them before ; but affection for a fellow-man, because he was a fellow-heir of eternal glory, they had not heard of. Among heathen nations of the present day, we often witness the change produced in one man towards another by the belief of the Gospel. They who formerly shunned each other as hostile, now embrace as friends never to be separated. They are led

to act towards each other in such a new way, that their yet heathen neighbours can only account for their conduct by the supposition that they are under the power of magic.

The love of one Christian to another has nothing in common with party spirit. It exists in spite of it, and even often, alas! together with it. It is not because a man believes a certain number of points as we do, that we love him. We love him, because we look upon him as one who has been in the same misery as ourselves, but now an expectant of the same glory. He is to spend an eternity with us in the kingdom of God, and therefore our hearts are drawn towards him. Suppose we are on board a ship with a number of persons going some to one country, others to another, if we find any going to the same place with ourselves, shall we not take a particular interest in such, and seek to cultivate their acquaintance? So is it in regard to what we are speaking of. The children of God are bound together by a chain of love; and this love is a thing so agreeable, that St. Paul calls it "the comfort of love." It is a pleasure to him that exercises it. It is a solace to his own heart, as well as to the heart of him who is the object of it. Anger tears the heart asunder—but love is a healing balsam applied to it. If the Christian religion supplied no other motive to embrace it than this *comfort of love*, yet would its claims on man be strong.

Next we come to the *fellowship of the Spirit*. This must signify the partaking of the same Spirit. All God's children have received the earnest of the Spirit into their hearts. This Spirit witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God. This Spirit

inclines all to walk in the same holy ways—to desire the same holy things—and to look forward to the same eternal joys. As Christians are bound together by *love*, so are they intimately united, as deriving their new life and heavenly vigour from the one Blessed Agent, the Holy Spirit.

But if Christians are consoled in Christ together, if they are comforted by their mutual love, and if they are quickened together by the same Spirit, they are also bound to each other by strong feelings of sympathy. For this is the import of the words *bowels and mercies*. The Jews were accustomed to view the bowels as the seat of strong affections. Hence the expression in the Old Testament, speaking of Joseph, when he saw his brother Benjamin, “His bowels did yearn upon his brother : and he sought where to weep ; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.” Again, it is said of the woman, who was the true mother of the child, about which the dispute was brought before Solomon, “Then spake the woman, whose the living child was, unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it.” Thus we learn that the expression *bowels and mercies* means strong emotion of the most tender nature. When one Christian sees another in trouble, he has a strong feeling of sympathy for him. This leads us to weep with them that weep, to pity them who are in bodily suffering, to give food to them that are hungry, and to clothe them that are exposed to the fury of the winter-tempest. It is impossible for one Christian to look upon another *in want*, without feeling something of the emotion which Joseph felt towards Benjamin—

without being inwardly so strongly moved, as to heave a sigh of compassion. This is the working of nature, and it ought not to be stifled. It will work far more powerfully than the most stringent poor-laws that ever were devised. This *sympathy* is so indispensable in the Christian, that St. John says, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Truly there is more enjoyment to the soul of a rich Christian in dispensing the treasures which his Heavenly Master hath committed to his trust among his necessitous fellow-believers, than in participating in all the luxuries which the appetite can desire. Wealth bestowed upon the gratification of the flesh is a talent misemployed. The Christian is himself bought with a price. He has nothing which does not belong to his Heavenly Master. He is commanded to offer up his very body as a sacrifice to God. If then he keeps back his property from the holy altar, that he may consume it upon his bodily pleasure, is he, I ask, free from the sin of sacrilege? Let us, then, brethren, give free scope to the compassionate feelings of our nature; and let us "do good unto all men" in need, as we have opportunity, "but especially unto them that are of the household of faith."

But we must go on with the consideration of the passage. The apostle has made the supposition that there existed among the Philippians "consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and

bowels and mercies.”* “I am rejoiced to think, O Philippians, that all these fruits of faith are among you. God has made me the instrument of turning you from dumb idols to Himself; of giving you everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace: this indeed rejoices my heart; but I am not contented with this degree of joy. I am desirous that you should possess more abundant grace. I am ambitious for your eternal good. I long for the perfection of my spiritual children: and while there is yet any thing to gain, my heart’s most fervent wish is that you may possess it. Do ye, then, O Philippians, make my joy complete, make it perfect.” Such, in my view, is the full import of the words “*fulfil ye my joy*,” as connected with the first verse of the chapter. But what is the thing demanded by the apostle, in order to complete his joy? It is this, O Philippians, and Christians of every age,—“*That ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*.” Let our interests be the same. Let us hold the same views of Divine truth. Let us beware of holding any opinion which cannot be adopted by our brethren, who as well as we search the Scriptures for the rule of our faith. Let us be a united people. Let us exercise the same love to others, which they exercise towards us. Nay, let us strive to go beyond them. Seeing their affection for us, let ours burn stronger for them. The expression “of one accord” is very strong in the original: it means united together, as if we had one soul to animate us all. O, how harmoniously we should work together, if we followed this advice of the

* Vide 2 Cor. viii. 7. 1 Peter i. 22.

holy apostle! How comforting to our hearts would such a state of things be! But oh, it is grievous to reflect, how very different is the state of Christians in these degenerate days, from the state in which the Apostle would have his disciples to live. Notwithstanding all the strife and division with which the body of Christ is torn and rent, yet let us rejoice that we are not altogether deprived of the heavenly guests of mutual love, and unanimity. Amidst the moral deserts these shine out, now in one green spot, now in another, as a proof that the showers of heavenly grace still descend upon the Church, and as a witness of the truth of the Saviour's promise—"Lo! I am with you *always, even unto the end of the world.*" Christian brethren, let this proof in your case be greatly strengthened. Be ye of one mind; live in peace; and the God of peace shall be with you. Ye believe in the communion of saints—Be not contented with believing it: realize it;—live in it.

The apostle proceeds next to give a warning—"Let *nothing be done through strife or vain-glory.*" Well did St. Paul know how hard a work it was, to eradicate from the soul the weeds of sin by which, in its unconverted state, it is overrun. Let the desire of contention and contradiction be entirely removed from the mind of the Christian. It is contrary to love. It will either as water extinguish the flame of love; or love will consume it, as dried stubble is burnt up with the fire. Now which of these alternatives is the preferable? Surely the latter. We cannot part with love. If it leave our hearts, they will become a dreary waste—with no comfort, no consolation, no rest, no peace. Let strife then give place to the oneness of mind and of accord which

true Christian love produces. And also, dear brethren, let us beware of being led to do any thing from a motive of *vain-glory*. Earthly *glory* is all *vain*. He who has truly humbled himself in penitence before God, for the sins of his past life, will not think that he deserves *glory* or praise from man. He will not covet to have the pre-eminence among his brethren. The Christian works, not that he may gain applause, but that he may please God. He who is desirous of vain-glory, of being spoken of as some great one among men, is under a great temptation, by which he is in danger of losing the privilege of hearing the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father :—" "Well done, good and faithful servant!" And why is such a one in danger? Simply because that which is most "approved among men, is often an abomination in the sight of God ;" because, in order to please man's fallen taste, one must abandon the unerring law and testimony of God. It is not however wrong to be pleased, if what we do from a desire to give glory to God meets the approbation of our Christian brethren. Far from it. This is the sympathy of feeling which exists between all who are children of the same heavenly Parent. If one by his conduct gives offence to those who seek to live to the glory of God, this may be regarded by him as a proof that such conduct is wrong. One may be as much the victim of a desire of vain-glory, by distinguishing himself by a course of conduct which he knows they will all condemn, as by one which he pursues because he knows they will all praise him for it. Let, then, the will of God be our standard in every thing that we do ; and let us do nothing merely that we

may be spoken of as persons more worthy, more wise, more learned, more charitable than our brethren. He who seeth the heart may condemn, while men applaud ; may despise, while men esteem us.

In conclusion the apostle calls us to a duty, which it is to be feared we by nature are little disposed to perform : "*In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*" These words teach us two things : 1. To think less of ourselves than we do of others, *i. e.* of our Christian brethren. 2. To be interested in their welfare as much as in our own. The nature of penitence is to humble a man in his own eyes. "His sin is ever before him." He cannot believe that any man can be more guilty than he ; and so without exaggeration every penitent can appropriate St. Paul's language to himself,—"*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*" God has hidden from our sight the real enormity of the sins of others, and brought fully before our spiritual eyes that of our own ; and so we are led to think of others more highly than of ourselves. Besides, we remember the words, Charity, or love, "*hideth a multitude of sins,*" throws a mantle over them and conceals them from the view ; and so our brethren whom we love appear as faultless, and we cannot but esteem them. But we know full well our own failings, and therefore in our own eyes we are despised. This is the true working of Christian love. O that it were more operative among all who take to themselves the name of Christ ! How unseemly is it, that a man should sometimes have to vindicate himself from false

charges ! Let this be done by his brethren who can do it with a better grace. Thus, according to Christ's holy will, let Christians be the guardians of each other's good name, bearers of one another's burdens. And as we are to be jealous, not, of our own but of each other's reputation, let us also obey the apostle, and be interested in the advancement of each other's good. Let us rejoice in each other's worldly prosperity ; let us help each other in adversity. So far as any one has need, let our worldly possessions go to help him. Thus on earth let us live together in love, harmony, and mutual regard ; and then at last we shall be taken to live in unity never to be severed, in the kingdom of our Father ; unto whom with His blessed Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all praise, and glory, and majesty, now and for ever. *Amen.*

LECTURE IX.

PHILIPPIANS II. 5—11.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THIS passage is evidently suggested by the exhortation in the fourth verse. The exhortation having been given, the apostle naturally proceeded to enforce it by the example of Christ. It is remarkable how frequently in the New Testament the example of Christ is held up to the imitation of his disciples. St. Paul, when pressing upon the Corinthians the duty of reliev-

ing the poor, says, (2 Cor. viii. 9) "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." St. Peter, (1 Ep. ii. 21—23) when inculcating the duty of patiently suffering adversity, says, "For even hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." The same apostle, in the fourth chapter, 1st verse, says, on the same subject, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." This language is very striking. The example of Christ is represented as *armour*. It fits the Christian for his spiritual conflict. It enables him to subdue the power of his enemies, and by it he is made sure of a conquest over them. St. John also commends to us the example of Christ, saying (1 Ep. ii. 6) "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Our Saviour Himself also taught His disciples that they were expected to follow His example. In St. Matthew, xi. 29, he says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Here the duty of following Christ's example is enforced from a motive of self-interest, as if our Saviour had said, "I wish your good, your present as well as your future good : I wish to see you unaffected by the tormenting, and soul-harassing power of pride, self-conceit, and anger. Now the only

way in which my desire can be fulfilled is, in your bringing your mind, spirit, and conduct into entire conformity with mine." Another passage in which the example of Christ is recommended to us is St. John's Gospel, Ch. xiii. v. 14 ; "If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." To which agree the words in verse 34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; *as* I have loved you, that ye also love one another : " and also the words in xv. 12, " This is my commandment, that ye love one another *as* I have loved you." From these passages quoted, it is very evident, that the practical part of Christianity consists in following the example of Christ ; that no man can claim to himself the name of Christ, unless he follow his example ; that no spiritual joy can be tasted without following that example ; and that just as that example is followed, will the fruits of true religion be enjoyed.

It has long ago been observed, that the shortest way to teach is by example. Our blessed Saviour, knowing every thing that was in man, knew this part of his nature also : and so, when it was time to begin His ministry among men, he chose unto Him twelve persons, who should be always with Him, to behold His actions, to hear His words, and to observe His temper and disposition ; and who should thus be able to draw a picture of their Blessed Master, which was to become a model to be copied by His people in all ages. " Be ye perfect, as your FATHER which is in heaven is perfect," said our Saviour—And how shall we know how perfect He is ? for no man hath seen God at any time.

True—"But the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath declared Him."

It does appear that one important reason why our Lord came in the flesh was, to make known to men the character and nature of His Father, after whose image we were at first created ; and to whose image we must be again restored, if we would enjoy that favour of His which is better than life. Persons may object in regard to following the example of Christ, and say : "How can we poor sinners follow the example of Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?" To this we answer, "True it is, there is an infinite difference between us and the blessed Son of God ; but, although we must ever in this world fall short of the degree of holiness which belonged to Him, yet may we be able, by the help of His promised aid, to walk, as far as we do go, in the steps of our Blessed Master." And it will be a great help to us in the endeavour to live a holy life, to keep ever before our eyes that bright example of Christ, which, as it stands in the gospel, as far outshines the example of men, as the sun outshines the little stars in the firmament. If we keep continually gazing at the sun, we shall be illuminated with his light, and warmed with his heat, and rendered abundantly fruitful by his generating influence. In one passage we are told, "They that compare themselves among themselves are not wise." This is a true saying. For it would be no great degree of holiness we should attain to, if we only strove to be as good as other men. But how different will it be, when nothing will satisfy us but a likeness to that image which is perfect and without a flaw ! Then there will be no rest to our endeavours

to advance—every moment of our life will be an onward progress : we shall take as our own motto the words—“*Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward ;*” or the similar words of St. Paul, “ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended”—that of which I was in pursuit ;—“ but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind,” as counting them like nothing, “ and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

When the apostle would commend to us the example of Christ in the inculcation of neglect of ourselves and kindness to our brethren, he was led to set before us the natural dignity and glory of our Blessed Lord, previous to His coming in the flesh ; and his mind having been led to that subject, he is carried away to certain other things in regard to our Lord, closely connected therewith.

We have consequently, in the passage which forms our text, the following topics set forth for our meditation :—

I. The dignity of our blessed Lord before He took our nature upon him :

II. The low condition to which He descended, in order to save us :

III. The exalted state to which He has been raised, as a reward for His humility : and

IV. The consequence of His exaltation,—that the whole universe is made subject unto Him.

This subject is evidently too extensive to be treated minutely in one lecture ; I shall therefore merely sug-

gest a few points for consideration under each of these four heads now mentioned.

I. The dignity of our Lord, before He came in the flesh.

In order to shew you how clearly this is a doctrine of the *Christian* religion, I will bring before you a few passages of sacred Scripture. Hear the words of our Lord Himself (St. John's Gospel, xvii. 5) "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Observe how solemn this language is. It is part of a prayer addressed by our Lord to God the Father. He appeals to Him who knoweth all things, and in that appeal, he takes it as a thing well known to the Father, to whom He speaks, that He existed with Him in glory before any part of the visible creation was brought into being. With these words of our Lord agrees that remarkable passage of St. Paul, in Coloss. i. 16, 17, "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." To shew the previous dignity of the Saviour, we read in St. John's Gospel, i. 1, 2, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." And lest we should doubt that this Word means our Lord and Saviour, the evangelist says, in the fourteenth verse, that this same Word "was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." These

texts clearly show the point which we were to prove, *viz.* the previous dignity of our Lord, before He took our nature upon Him. But we are next led to inquire what was the nature of that dignity? And to this question, the apostle in our text gives the answer in these words,—“ *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*” *i. e.* He did not consider it as an unauthorized act, to claim to Himself a dignity equal to that of God the Father. Nor in His claiming that equality could any accuse Him of arrogance, or robbery, or taking that which did not rightfully belong to Him. This doctrine of St. Paul’s exactly agrees with that of the prophet Isaiah. Hear what is said in the passage which is appointed as the first lesson for Christmas day: “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” And, in order to shew that this is indeed a prophecy in regard to our Lord, you may read the words in Luke i. 31—33, “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name *Jesus*. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” This is clearly an application of the words of the prophet Isaiah; and you

will observe that this application is made by unerring authority,—it is made by the angel Gabriel, who was sent from God to Mary the virgin, to announce that she was to be so highly favoured as to become the mother of the Saviour of the world. We have the authority of St. Paul, (Heb. i. 8) for applying to our Lord the words in Psalm, xlv. 6, 7, “Thy throne O God is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

With these abundant proofs in Sacred Scripture, are we not justified in believing, with the faithful in all ages, that Christ was as truly God as He was truly man,—“God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world?” Now, after such abundant proof, can we refrain from pitying the perverseness of those who go about to unsettle this most firm and established doctrine? Truly if we will not believe this, there is no doctrine in Sacred Scripture secure of a long standing. No doctrine is clearer—none more prominent. Indeed, if Christ was not God, equal with the Father, what force would there be in the argument in the text? If Christ had no being before He was born of the virgin, how could He be said to humble Himself in becoming man? Let us then firmly believe, mysterious though the subject be, that our Lord is indeed equal with the Father in power, and eternity of existence. This view of our Saviour is consoling to us. We are not to hold it as a point to be disputed with angry feelings, but as a source of endless comfort, in that light indicated by St. Paul

in the epistle to the Hebrews, *viz.* that we have a Saviour “who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he *ever liveth* to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest was needful for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” In this perfect Almighty Saviour, we may and will rejoice. He knows all our infirmities—He sees the state and destitution of our souls—He knows what we are in need of—He will make all grace abound to us, so that we may triumph in his power, and rejoice in the strength of His *Divine* arm.

II. We are now to consider the *humiliation* of Christ. And here observe the terms used by the Apostle—“*He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ;*” *i. e.* He is content to hide for a season, to conceal His divinity. He, who was the Lord and Creator of the universe, as we have seen, deigns even to become a servant, and to appear in human form. To this agrees our Lord’s own declaration—“The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” It is very observable, what was the time in the history of the world chosen for His appearance in it. It was the time when the royal family of David, from which He was descended, was in utter decadence. The mother of whom He was born, was a virgin espoused, not to a prince, but to a carpenter. The Saviour of the world might have chosen a time when the lineage of David was in its regal splendour ; but He did not : He chose the time when it was reduced to its lowest state ; when it was not only

going to enrol itself for the payment of a tax to a foreign power, but when it was so reduced that His mother could find no better natal bed for Him than a manger, and no better accommodation than a stable could afford. Yes, it pleased Him, who was Lord of heaven and earth, to humble Himself so as to experience the lot of the poorest, whose homage He seeks. We are called to follow the example of Christ, and that example is presented in the most unfavourable circumstances. Let us not then think, we should be more holy if we were placed in such and such circumstances. Our Lord was placed in the very lowest—and yet in every thing He was *harmless, undefiled, and separate from the blame of sin*. Our Lord in His lowly state was not only a servant to do the will of God, but He was a servant to man. The evangelist applies justly to Him the words of the prophet, “Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” He frequented the company of the lowest and the poorest of His nation. He was rather the companion of the mourner, than of those that make merry with feasting. He spent the most of His time with those among whom the miseries of this life were most apparent. The sick, the halt, the lame, the blind ; the leper, the demoniac, the publican, the sinner, saw more of Him than the whole, the respectable, and the wealthy. He was truly the physician of the sick, the friend of the helpless, the teacher of the ignorant, the shepherd in search of the lost and scattered sheep, the guide of the poor penitent to the way of pardon and life, the author of comfort to the heart of the bereaved widow, and the friend to sympathize in sorrow with those who were deprived of such

as were dear to them. And what our Saviour was once, He is still. In all our afflictions He can sympathize, for in all points He was tempted (or tried) as we are now. And so the help which we need, He is able and He is also willing to bestow. But it was not enough for our Lord to become a servant. He must descend lower in the scale of humiliation : *“For being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* Having appeared as a man, acted as the servant of man, done the will of God in trying circumstances, subjected Himself to the companionship of the least happy of our race,—our Lord might have disappeared from among us by a miracle, as by a miracle He came. But this He did not. All man’s misery He shall bear—and more than any man ever bore. His sacred “visage” by suffering “was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” Christ not only became the companion of the sorrowful—but had to endure in His own sacred person more than any human sorrow. For He had to bear our iniquities—He had to be chastised for our peace, and to endure stripes in order that we might be healed. This suffering He had to endure, not merely as an example to us, how we should also meekly suffer ;—but He had to endure it as a satisfaction and atonement for sin, not His own, but our’s. It was the good pleasure of God the Father to save us from our lost estate. We had rebelled against Him. We had thus plunged ourselves in unspeakable misery. And nothing can deliver us, short of the Son of God Himself taking our nature upon Him, and suffering in His own person the punishment which

justly belonged to us. Blessed be His glorious name! that He thus willingly and freely undertakes our case, pitiful as it is! In order to save us, it was needful not only that the Saviour should die, but He has to die "*even* the death of the cross." In the law it is written "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." We have not done the things that are written in the law, we have broken each one of the ten commandments, we therefore are liable to the curse pronounced on those that do not obey. But it pleased God that His Son, who is for ever *Blessed*, should be made a curse for us. And He was made a curse for us, in being put to death in the way of the vilest malefactors; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The death of the cross was the one appointed by the Romans for slaves, and captives taken in war. It could not be inflicted on any who enjoyed the freedom of any Roman city. Hence, when it became St. Paul's turn to seal his testimony to the doctrine of Christ with his death, he enjoyed a privilege which was denied to his Lord, he was not exposed to the shame and lingering torture of the cross, but *simply beheaded*. Dreadful were the sufferings of those who were crucified. They were stripped naked. They were fixed to the cross by nails driven through their hands and feet, where the nerves of the body have a peculiar tenderness of feeling. In those hot countries multitudes of flies would crowd upon the bloody wounds; and when life became feeble, numerous birds of prey would gather around, to increase the torment. Men passing by would taunt the miserable sufferer with the

crime for which he suffered ; and to him there was no relief. Death would be often wished for ; but it was long before it came. Such was the death of the cross ! Is there any wonder then that St. Paul, in our text, calls us to admire the humiliation of Christ, saying that He humbled Himself—even to “*the death of the cross.*” Thus did the Saviour suffer for us,—for us ! unworthy, rebellious men ! And how do we receive the message of such love ? Too often, alas ! with indifference, as if the message were either not for us, or of no great importance. It is however a message of life or of death. If we believe it, we attain unto life everlasting : If we refuse it, eternal woe shall be our never-ending portion.

III. We are to consider the exalted state to which our Lord hath been raised as a reward for His humility. “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.*” Jesus refused not to go for our sakes to the lowest depths of woe. He even voluntarily suffered for a season the hiding of his blessed Father’s countenance. But all His sufferings are now over. The clouds have disappeared from the sky—and the sun shineth in his noon-day brightness. The throne which He left vacant is again resumed. The angels whose company He forsook, that He might succour miserable man, again surround Him, and veil their faces with their wings, in token of their reverence. The glory which He had with the Father before, He again enjoys. But He has now a new subject of joy. He has ransomed a glorious multitude from among men, to partake with Himself the glories of the Divine nature. He now contemplates “the travail of His soul,” and, as He contemplates, He “is satisfied.”

He has restored order to that fair universe, which had been spoiled by the sin of its first man. He has now even a seed to do Him service. He has now obtained the promise of the eternal Father—"Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the *heathen* for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The Saviour who suffered is now enthroned beside the Eternal Father, with the assurance given to Him, that He shall there sit, "*till all his enemies be made his footstool.*" When we think of our Saviour's exaltation as the reward of His humility, we may take some comfort to ourselves. This world is the period of our humiliation ; but God will exalt us in due time. In the proper season we shall reap, if we faint not. We have been invited to a feast, and at that feast we have meekly seated ourselves in the lowest room, as the place most fitted for us. But by and by the Master of the feast will come, and see us, and say, "Friend, go up higher : thou hast fought the good fight, and run thy long race. Now it is time for thee to receive thy crown. Long enough hast thou grovelled in poverty and want. Come thou, now, O blessed one of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world."

IV. We must briefly notice the consequence of Christ's exaltation,—that the universe is made subject unto Him ; for this is the import of the words "*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*" This is accom-

plished in some measure, when the sinner is turned from the error of his ways, and gives himself up as a willing servant to the Saviour. It will be accomplished in a more glorious manner, when the latter day splendour shall begin to shine, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," as the waters fill the channel of the great deep. But it will be fully accomplished at that awful period, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, and when before Him shall be gathered all nations—when He shall render to every one according to the deeds done in the body—when the books shall be opened, and the dead, small and great, king and beggar, shall be judged according to the things written therein. Then shall the Saviour be supreme, and acknowledged as such by all the universe ; angels and men, and those who are now under chains of darkness, shall all bow before him, and from his tribunal none can turn away. Then shall the high priests, who despised and mocked Him ; then shall the Socinian, who refused to acknowledge His divinity, be confounded, when they see Him clothed in all the unspeakable grandeur of Deity ; while they "that pierced Him" shall sadly mourn in anguish and dismay.—May it be ours, by a timely submission, to acknowledge Him as the only Lord and Saviour, and so at that awful day to be numbered among those to whose charge nothing can be laid ; as they shall have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb !"



LECTURE X.

PHILIPPIANS II. 12—18.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings : that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ; holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.

THE conversion of the Philippians was no sudden whim, nor passing admiration of the eloquence of the extraordinary preacher who first announced to them "life and immortality" through a crucified Saviour. They were convinced of the doctrine which he

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published to them. They saw that he himself believed it ; for they were witnesses to the persecution which he endured on account of it ; and they had heard of the power of the Christian faith on the minds of those that believed it, as exemplified in the fact of Paul and Silas, while made fast in the stocks in the prison of their town, rejoicing and singing praise to God, in the hearing and doubtless to the astonishment of their fellow-prisoners. They received Paul as a messenger from God ; they looked upon his message as coming from their Creator ; that message, their hearts were opened to embrace ; and, when embraced, it gave them peace and comfort.

How changed was their condition by it ! Formerly they were poor deluded idolaters ; now they were taught concerning the true God. Formerly they were living in malice and envy ; now they are led "to love one another with pure hearts fervently." Formerly they were without hope ; now they are "begotten again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

It was not a desire to gain the good will of a great man, that led the Philippians to embrace the religion recommended by St. Paul. They were convinced of its truth ; and so they embraced it at all hazards. They did indeed become desirous of pleasing Paul, by submitting obediently to the course of conduct which he saw proper to enjoin upon them. Their obedience, even when he was present among them, was very marked ; but when he was obliged to leave them, in order that other regions beyond them should hear his life-giving message, they increased their efforts to act up to the

instructions which he had given when yet in their company. They were afraid lest they should fail to prove the sincerity of their faith; they were jealous lest a broad enough contrast between their heathen and their Christian life should not be exhibited. They knew that if they did not approve themselves to Christ's chosen servant, they would also most certainly fail to obtain the favour of the Divine Saviour Himself.

The religion of this people was not hypocritical. It was their work, nay, their very life. Those whose hearts are not in their profession, are not found attending to their religious duties, except when they are in the presence of some one, either their minister or pious friend, whose favour they wish to retain, or from whom they look for some worldly advantage.

But woe unto you that seek the honour that cometh from man, and despise the honour and the approbation of Him, whose favour can secure everlasting life, as His frown can procure everlasting dismay! Are ye so thoughtless as not to know, that God is ever near you, to behold all your actions; to mark every unholy thought; to hear every improper word; and to remember, against a future day of reckoning, every unholy deed which ungodly men can commit?

But let the hypocrite deceive himself no longer. If he be not discovered even in the present life; if no unexpected accident lay open the enormity of his conduct—the blackness of his guilt—to those whose favour he is anxious to retain;—he shall at length be made to stand confounded, when, on the awful day, he shall be summoned to appear, trembling in the presence of all that ever lived, to answer for the deeds done in the

body. Then he may say, "How foolish was I to endeavour to appear, for a moment's profit, what I knew I was not! to make myself seem religious, when I knew that I was a drunkard, a covetous man, an unclean person! Now, alas! there is nothing for me but the portion of the hypocrite, which is, that *my hope shall perish!*"

But may I be persuaded better things of you, brethren, though I thus speak? I hope you are desirous of emulating the Philippians; seeking to evince the sincerity of your religious profession, not only in the presence of your minister or religious friends, but much more in their absence. Ye know and remember, that ye have a God to serve and to please, who cannot be imposed upon, "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid."

"*Work out your own.... trembling.*" It may occur to some, on reading this passage, to ask,—“Would this have been written by our modern Calvinists, who represent man as a mere passive machine, in bringing about the great object of the salvation of his soul?” There must be on the part of a sinner a *will* to be saved. And let it not be pretended, that he is not able to exert this will. For if he were not, what justice would there be in the Saviour's rebuke, “Ye will not (*i. e.* ye are not willing to) come unto me, that ye might have life?”

When the Lord works His merciful work of salvation in the soul of a sinner, that sinner is willing and desirous to co-operate. No man then has a right to expect, that salvation will be lavished upon him unwished and unsought for. If you want to escape misery and obtain bliss,—you must bestir yourself; if you are sensible of

the plague of your heart, and of its inability to follow out any good desire,—you must earnestly seek that help, “without which nothing is strong—nothing is holy;” if you truly wish to be imbued with heavenly wisdom,—you must fervently ask it of “the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.”

Faithful brethren in Christ, St. Paul warns you not to be idle during the time allotted to you on earth. Your salvation is an important work. It is the most solemn in which you can engage; it is one which must never be lost sight of, even in the time of the greatest worldly bustle. Nothing that a Christian can do is unconnected with this work. Every other work bears upon it, either setting it forward or retarding it. God forbid, that we should be contented to be found doing any work of the latter kind. We ought to be very careful of what we do. Remember that God, although he saved the Israelites from the house of bondage, and brought them a considerable way towards the promised land; yet He afterwards destroyed them all, except two, in the wilderness,—because they ceased to please Him, and to remember His strange “works by the Red Sea, and in the land of Ham.” St. Paul tells us, that their example is left written for our learning: Oh, may it not be lost upon us!

v. 13. “*For it is God.....good pleasure.*” It is difficult to see the force of the expression in the last clause of this verse. It may mean, either the *object* which Christians are “to will and to do;” or it may also refer to the *manner* in which God is pleased to operate on, and dwell in His people. The verse may be translated either thus—“It is God that worketh in you,

both to will and to do whatever is well-pleasing to Himself:" or it may be thus rendered—"It is God who graciously of His mere mercy and favour worketh in you, both in your wills and deeds." There is some ambiguity in the Greek original: but the latter meaning seems the more agreeable to the grammatical structure of the words.

Here you see that you are not called to such a serious work, as the accomplishment of your salvation is, without help offered. God is merciful and gracious, and imposes no task upon His rational creatures, which it is not in their power to fulfil. Oh, how kind to couple all His commands with some encouragement for us, to be diligent in our efforts to obey them! Every thing that He calls us to do, is for our good,—our temporal and everlasting benefit. The work of our salvation is an arduous work. God well knows this; and therefore He hath promised His help in carrying it on.

Men, on believing the Gospel, are made new creatures; "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." While they live in disobedience to God, they are led by a spirit,—but it is the spirit of "the prince of the power of the air." They are assisted in their evil deeds,—but it is by that agency, which is never exerted but for the bane of man.

The converted man is brought under a new influence. He becomes a habitation of the Holy Spirit. Think not that I am using strong and unwarranted language; the apostle himself bears me out: "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them." "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if

any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Here the language is plain enough to warrant our saying, that the believer is led, by Divine influence, in the way of righteousness; is strengthened by God Himself for the performance of the righteous acts which mark the Christian out from all other men.

Here then learn, how false is the opinion of those who look upon Christianity as nothing more than a fine system of moral philosophy, greatly preferable to that of Pythagoras, or Socrates, Aristotle, or Epictetus;—as a system of Divine work, better indeed than the ritual of blood among the Jews, or that of divers washings among the Mussulmans, or of brutal human sacrifices among the Pagans.

The fact is, brethren, Christianity is an *exclusive* system. "There is no other name given under heaven, but the name of Jesus, by which men can be saved." There is no religion but His, on which the Almighty does not frown. Christ is the only refuge for the guilty sinner; and all other refuges, being false and vain, shall be utterly swept away; and those that trust in them shall perish in like manner.

Christianity is effective, not because it is a sound system of ethics—although this may be a subordinate cause of its efficiency—but because it is a system, in which the energy of the Almighty Creator is itself at work. A Christian is led on to the practice of holiness by omnipotent power. Let not this be set down as enthusiasm: it is the plain doctrine of Holy Scripture: it has been held by God's people in all ages. They have spoken only their experience, when they testified, that truly the Holy Spirit dwelt in them, and that

“greater was He that was in *them* than he that was in *the world*.”

Do not think, brethren, that you expect too much, when you ask that God would dwell in your heart. You are warranted by His own promise, “Your Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” “Behold (saith the glorified Redeemer,) I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” Jesus said to His disciples when on earth, “If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” The blessed martyr Ignatius, when on his way from Asia to Rome, to be thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, delighted, in all his epistles to the Churches, to take to himself the epithet of *Θεοφόρος*, i. e. he that bears about God in his heart. Brethren ! you will not accomplish the work of your salvation, unless to you also such an epithet be applicable. Let us then be desirous that God would work powerfully in us ; cause us to wish for and desire, help us to execute and bring to good effect, whatever is in accordance with “his good pleasure.”

v. 14. “*Do all things..... disputings.*” [I have had occasion already, when speaking on the verses at the beginning of this chapter, fully to press upon your attention the duty of living in peace and unity. I will therefore not dwell upon the subject now, lest I should seem to think that ye are less peaceable, and more given to dispute, than, I hope, you are. Only let me say, that

it is our duty to abound in this as well as in every other good work.]

We live in a world in which as yet all men have not faith; we live in a day in which disputings and controversies are very rife. Let us be anxious to be kept out of the fearful strife of tongues; and as our course is clearly laid down in Holy Scripture, let us be ready to run in it without murmuring: and as our duty, both as Christians and as subjects, is also clearly set before us, let us be ready to fulfil that duty without gain-saying, and without disputing.

v. 15. "*That ye may be in the world.*" Here learn how clearly the Christian must be marked out from the men of the world. He is as a light in the world. Darkness surrounds him: he must illumine it. If it were not dark, his light would neither be seen nor required. But the world, alas! is dark. God is forgotten. His knowledge is neglected. Sin is pursued. Men of their own accord have put out the light which might have been shining upon them. Their deeds were crooked and perverse; therefore they were afraid of the light, lest it should reprove them, and reveal their shamefulfulness. But, Christians, ye are a light yourselves. God shines in you, and makes you full of light. Boast not of your light, however; for it is not inherent in you, but reflected *from* you. It is not as the light of the sun, proceeding from himself; but it is as the light of the moon, derived originally from the orb of day.

Be ye careful then to show your light, that ye may approve yourselves as faithful in your jealousy for the honour of Him, from whom that light comes. Ye are

so to "let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify—not you, but—your Father which is in heaven." Ye are the sons of God. Be not a disgrace to your high parentage. Be harmless and without rebuke. Wherefore should the ungodly triumph, and say, "There is no help for them in God?" I charge you, brethren,—not for the regard you have for your own good name, but—for the love which you bear to the God that made,—the Saviour who died for you—be harmless and without rebuke, be exemplary in every act of your life; in order that ye may sustain and uphold the honour of your title as "the sons of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

v. 16. "*Holding forth the word of life . . . in vain.*" Pastor and people are called to work *together*. If he declare the sound doctrine of life from the pulpit, they are to bear it forth abroad in their life and conduct in the world. They are to take care, lest the word which they hear in Church be left there and forgotten. If such a thing happen, the pastor would indeed have cause to mourn that he "had run in vain and laboured in vain."

Alas! how often does this happen! How many has he often seen apparently pleased to listen to his doctrine, who have in their daily life run directly opposite to the warnings which he has earnestly delivered!

Let it not be so with us, my dear brethren. Let us all now so act, that we may rejoice together in the day of Christ;—I, that I have been privileged to declare to you the truth as it is in Jesus; and you, that you have been found faithful in holding it fast. Let us be but

“faithful unto death, and we shall be presented with a crown of life !”

vv. 17 and 18. “Yea and if I bewith me.”
See the noble self-devotion of the great apostle ! He was not inclined to shrink back from the execution of the commission which he received from the Lord Jesus, when it was said to him—“Behold I send thee far hence to the Gentiles !” From among them he was to be honoured in gathering a people to honour the name of Jesus. All the trouble encountered in such a mission he willingly undergoes. Oh, how must the Philippians have been moved with gratitude towards the man, who, in communicating the glad tidings of the gospel to them, adventured and perilled his own life ! How disinterested ! how compassionate ! Rather than see men perishing in the service of idols, and the practice of sin, without God and without hope in the world,—the apostle counts not his own life dear to him ; but even when in prison, for the very act of going among the Gentiles ; even when awaiting his trial, and uncertain how it was to go with him ;—he rejoices at the consideration, that *his* loss for this life was *their* gain for eternity ; that his blood, poured out in martyrdom, would be a libation ascending up with acceptance to heaven, commingled with the sacrifice and service of their faith ;—and all rendered availing, and a savour of a sweet smell, before the throne, whereon is seated the eternal God, being perfumed with the incense of the infinite merit of the precious blood of the Lamb that was slain !

Well might the Philippians rejoice with the apostle. We, brethren, rejoice with him too. The sufferings

which he looked forward to, when he wrote these words, are now long ago over, and that for ever. He is safe from all the cruelty which ungodly men can inflict. His self-denying boldness first carried to Europe the glad tidings of the Gospel. In these good tidings we rejoice. We rejoice in them, as the source of all our hopes, and the spring of all our present joys, and we trust that they will form the theme of our everlasting *hallelujahs* !

Oh, let us imitate the disinterestedness of St. Paul ! There are yet many nations and people in our world, to whom no message of mercy has ever been carried. We must not count our lives nor our property dear to us, until all be brought to "know the Lord" our Redeemer, "from the least even to the greatest ;" until there shall "arise incense and a pure offering" to God's holy name ; and until "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, *His* Name shall be great among the Gentiles !"

LECTURE XI.

PHILIPPIANS II. 19—30.

But I trust in the Lord Jesus, to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord, that I also myself shall come shortly. Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

IN this passage there is no doctrine stated, no exhortation given, no mystery propounded. What then is to engage the preacher, or what more has he to do for his hearers with this part, than simply to read it? All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for instruction in the way of righteousness. We have no doctrine here, to be sure, no mystery, no exhortation; but we have clearly set forth before us the holy examples of some of God's saints, who are now enjoying the bliss which Christ the Lord hath prepared for all that love Him.

The author of this epistle, in speaking of personal matters to those whom he is addressing, has incidentally, as it were, given us a view of the Christian feelings and character of himself, of Timothy, of Epaphroditus, and of the Philippians.

As to himself; he appears when, in the most critical circumstances, about to be brought to trial before the cruel Nero, not so much careful about what might befall himself, as desirous for the spiritual welfare of the Philippians—his children in the faith. This his desire is exhibited in the words, "*that I may be of good comfort when I know your estate;*" and it also appears in the anxiety to send to them a friend, in whose faithfulness he could confide. He was desirous to send, not one who had business of his own to look after, and so would be careless of them—but one who was so devoted to the service of the Lord Christ, that he would give himself entirely to promote His glory in the edification and advancement in the faith of His new disciples at Philippi. St. Paul had several companions with him at this time besides Timothy—but they were not faithful

enough for his purpose—" *all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*"—The only one whom he could fully confide in was Timothy; but him at present he cannot spare away from his own person. St. Paul had much to do for a faithful Christian brother as an attendant. He himself was a prisoner—prevented from going about among the Christian brethren in Rome, where he was confined. It was therefore needful that one such as Timothy should be near him, to carry his messages from time to time to those Christian brethren who, in the capital of the empire, had been turned to the faith of Christ through his preaching. Besides, as it appears that wherever St. Paul was, he attracted crowds, who were desirous of hearing what he thought of the "new way" which was beginning to be much talked about, he would require a faithful assistant, who, when he was exhausted with his labour, might go on with the discussion in the hearing of the unsatisfied and anxious listeners.

But see St. Paul's great love for the Christians at Philippi! As soon as he can possibly spare him—he is to send for their benefit his most endeared earthly companion. It was not enough for the great apostle, to have sown the seed of the eternal word among the Philippians. He wishes it to spring up and ripen, and produce abundant fruit. The plant which he had placed in that garden, he wishes to foster, and to water with the dews of more heavenly doctrine. He knew that they were, like all others in this sinful world, exposed to many temptations, and so in danger of being led away from the faith of the Gospel, and from the practice of the holy duties which it enjoins. Hence the

need for a faithful deputy from the apostle, to remind them of the joy with which they received the message of life at the first, and to repeat the injunctions to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, and to be holy as He was holy, and to guard themselves strictly from the pollutions of the heathen among whom they dwelt. O how numerous are the dangers by which "the path of the just" is beset! How needful to have, every hour, God's protecting hand around us! Our enemies are strong and stubborn, and we are frail, and too ready to submit to them. St. Paul knew that this was our frail condition—and therefore it was, that, as congregations of new believers increased through his means, his care also increased. And O how busy was he in the service of his Lord! how entirely engrossed in it! One might have thought that he was doing enough at one time, when he was suffering imprisonment for the name of the Lord Jesus. But not so thought he. Even in his imprisonment he seeks with all his might to extend the knowledge of the Gospel, to open men's eyes, and to "turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." And not only is he interested in those immediately before him; but his anxious heart burns for the good of those in a distant province. The love of this man of God was extended, like that of his Divine Master, as the light of the sun. What an example is this for us, who profess the same faith as St. Paul did! When personal trials grow heavy upon us, let us take our minds off from the unpleasant contemplation of them, and busy ourselves with the work of our Lord and Saviour. When our temporal affairs take an unhappy turn, let us delight in endeavours to advance the

spiritual interests of our Christian brethren, and to extend the saving knowledge of the Gospel to our fellow-sinners. Be our first care about the good of souls ; let our chief anxiety be about the well-being of that which the changes of time, and the tyrants of earth cannot affect. Having *first* secured our own everlasting safety by firm trust in a crucified Saviour, let us be desirous *next* of swelling the ranks of the redeemed, and thus participate in the joy of angels, and the delight of the Saviour Himself, who, when He “sees of the travail of his soul,” is satisfied. He who is regardless of the spiritual welfare of others, is in a perilous condition himself ; for no one can have experienced that change, which is called in Scripture a passage “from death unto life,” without feeling pity and compassion for those who are yet in death—in the death of sin, and exposed to its fearful consequences in a world to come.

Learn thou, then, who art not able to sympathize with St. Paul in his care for others, that thou art in a woeful state thyself—asleep, I must warn thee, in the arms of the wicked one,—a slave led captive by him at his will ; in danger, every moment of thy life, of being cast away from this world of hope, where the light of the gospel shines into a land of darkness and endless despair.

So much concerning St. Paul’s anxiety for the salvation of souls. Let us now look at what is said of Timothy. How amiable is the character of this young man ! He must be something more than ordinary, when we find him chosen by St. Paul as his companion. As a son with a father, he serves the indefatigable apostle in the gospel. It is no slight praise bestowed on Timothy, to say that he was like-minded with St. Paul, that he had the same

anxious care for the Christians at Philippi as the great apostle had. We cannot but admire a young man, when he acts in such a manner as to merit the approbation of the wise and the experienced. "It is a distinguished honour," says the Roman proverb, "to be praised by a paise-worthy man." In this case the honour is peculiarly great; for St. Paul not only praises Timothy, but represents him as equal to himself,—equal to himself in disinterestedness, and devotedness to the spiritual welfare of Christ's faithful people. This pious youth neglects all the pleasures which are usually run after by persons of his age, and devotes himself entirely to those grave duties which are more especially the province of men of years, whose minds have been sobered by frequent recurrences of the sorrows of the world. It is intimated to the praise of Timothy, that he would "naturally care for the state" of the Philippians; that is, he would care for them, not as a mere deputy from St. Paul doing exactly the things concerning which he might be furnished with instructions; but he would look after their interests with all the care and anxiety of one most nearly related to them. His care would be the result of a kind of spiritual instinct. As a father cares for the good of his offspring, so would Timothy care for the Christians at Philippi. For, if we turn to the history of their conversion, we shall find that Timothy had a part in it. In the 16th of the Acts we read, that when Paul was at Lystra in Asia Minor, he found a certain disciple named Timothy, who was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium: him therefore would Paul have to go forth

with him to the work of making known the Gospel. He then became one of Paul's companions. Paul and his companions, after passing through some of the cities of Asia Minor, came down to the sea-coast at the famous city of Troy, where Paul had a vision, which was as follows: "There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him saying, 'Come over, and help us.' And after he had seen the vision, says St. Luke the historian, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them. Therefore sailing from Troas, we, *i. e.* Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke the relater of the history, came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to *Philippi*, which is the first city of that part of Macedonia—and we were in that city abiding certain days." During these "days" it was, that the work of conversion began among those people. Timothy's name is not mentioned again until the time when we hear of Paul's flight from Macedonia to the south of Greece, made necessary by the violence of the persecuting Jews;—there, we read (Chap. xvii. 14, 15) "and then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed."

The object of this reference to the history of the founding of the Philippian Church is, to show you how "natural" it would be for Timothy "*to care for*

their state." You now see that he was one of the ambassadors of Christ, who declared to them the way of salvation. Solemn and awful is the relation between the servants of Christ, and those who by their means have been instructed in the way of life. Such persons expect to dwell together for ever in the mansions of bliss. The servant of Christ expects to have, as his everlasting crown of joy, those who by his means have been brought to know the Lord. No wonder then that he is anxious about them ! No wonder that he desires that they may "go forward" on the path to glory ! It is natural for him to care for their state ; to be desirous, that they may grow in the knowledge of the divine Word,—that they may advance in the pursuit of holiness,—and that they may "hold fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end." It is natural for him to take care, lest any should come short of the promised rest by falling into unbelief ; lest any should fall from his steadfastness, and should so go back unto perdition ; lest the evil tempter, who is ever on the watch, should beguile some unstable soul, and allure it back to the hard bondage, from which it appeared to have "clean escaped." It is natural for the servant of Christ to set his heart on those, in whose minds he has first raised the joyful hope of future bliss ; whose consciences he has pacified by preaching forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb ; and whose souls he has expanded, by raising them from the contemplation of the vanities of a world that passeth away, to that of Him who hath declared Himself to be the "refuge of his people in all generations," to be "the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever."

Brethren, if we have been the humble instrument of increasing in any one of you a sense of things unseen, of arousing attention in the careless to the things that belong to their peace, of directing the regard of those who were engrossed with the affairs of the world to the consideration that they have a soul to be saved from hell, and a God offended to be reconciled to ;—then indeed do we believe that the Almighty hath conferred an honour upon us, which is not for a moment to be compared with the highest dignities to which the sovereigns of earth could raise us. This, dear brethren, would be a reward far more than sufficient for all the care expended, and all the prayers offered on your behalf, even although we had perilled our lives by coming from the ends of the earth to make known to you the message of a Saviour's love! If then you and I be induced, by the statements of the Divine Word which I am from time to time privileged to bring before you, to give more heed than ever we have done to the glorious things which we have heard,—I shall, I am sure, like Timothy, naturally care for you ; and however far we may be separated in future years, it shall be a pleasure to me to learn, that you continue “stedfast in the faith, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” We are those who shall live together in the presence of the Lord, when all the changes of earth are over ; who shall rejoice in the full felicities which are at the right hand of God, when we shall have each sustained patiently the appointed portion of tribulation through which we must pass to the kingdom of God. In such a view do I regard you, dear brethren in Christ, who

have trusted in Him, whose name I declare as "the only name given under heaven by which we must be saved."

We must now notice the character of Epaphroditus. It does not appear in Scripture how or when this man became a disciple of Christ. From his name I should be inclined to infer that he was a heathen, and not a Jew, before his conversion. He may safely be supposed to have been a native of Philippi. Perhaps he was a man of considerable learning and ability as a public speaker. At all events he possessed the requisite qualifications of a pastor of a Christian congregation. For it appears, from the epithets applied to him in v. 25, that he was the person appointed by St. Paul to the charge of the church at Philippi. Paul there calls him "*his brother, companion in labour, and fellow-soldier.*" But, if we cannot accurately learn the history of this good man, we are pleased with the view which the apostle St. Paul gives us of his character. Who can refrain from admiring his affection for the imprisoned apostle, which led him at the peril of his life to undertake the long journey from Philippi to Rome! It is when one is in need, that kindness is truly welcome and best valued. How must the heart of the apostle have been gladdened, when relief in his distress was brought to him by the hands of a Christian brother from a far country. Truly, the love which the primitive Christians professed to each other was not a spurious sentimental thing—but a principle working in their hearts, and carrying itself out in deeds of love and kindness. You see, Epaphroditus might have had an excuse for delaying a visit to Rome at this time. St. Paul, who stood in need of his help, was in prison, and charged with

offences for which, right or wrong, his life was in jeopardy. It was therefore unsafe for one to become too friendly towards him, lest he might thereby be involved in the same danger. But this did not move Epaphroditus. The apostle, whom he loved for the Lord's sake, was in want, and he must go to relieve him. This was the best way of showing his love to the apostle's Lord: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." But it would appear, that, on the way from Philippi to Rome, Epaphroditus had fallen "sick," so as even to be "nigh unto death." It seems also, that he had hastened on his way too soon after his recovery, so that the apostle says "he regarded not his life" from his urgency to fulfil towards St. Paul the service which the Philippians, had they been near, would themselves have performed. This is the kind of affection which one loves to see manifested by one Christian towards another. And that love alone is acceptable to God, which is so engrossed with its object, that self in the meantime is quite forgotten.

There is one feature in Epaphroditus which must not be passed by; we mean his tender regard for the feelings of his brethren, whose pastor he was. He studiously concealed from them the fact of his illness. He no doubt wished rather to inform them with gratitude of his recovery, than to cast them down by the news of his sickness, and so perhaps lead them to be anxious about his own life, and also fearful lest their kind intentions towards St. Paul should be left unaccomplished. Brethren, let us conclude our remarks on this character with the words of the apostle, "*Receive*

him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation ;” and may we all be found anxious to be acting under the influence of the same principle.

We must now lastly notice the character of the Philippians. This has already appeared to great advantage. Besides their great love to St. Paul, which prompted them to help him in his necessity, we have seen their strong attachment to Epaphroditus their pastor. However anxious he was to conceal the fact of his illness, their affectionate inquisitiveness about him had found it out, and on hearing of it they were affected with deep sorrow ; and so St. Paul says, “*I was the more desirous to send him, that when ye see him again ye may rejoice.*” Oh ! that this spirit of love would now descend to visit the Church of God. How strong is the bond of Christian love ! How closely does it hold together all Christ’s faithful disciples ! And walking in this love together, how are the bitters of this life sweetened ! how are its burdens lightened !

Brethren, if we are united together by faith in the same Saviour, by hope of the same eternal joys, by participation of the same blessed Spirit of holiness, let us imitate the example of the early saints, and “love one another with pure hearts fervently,” and, to adopt the language of St. John, “let us love, not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (1 Ep. iii. 18.) Let us, as we have the opportunity and the ability, employ ourselves in relieving the necessities of our Christian brethren, especially those who are enduring trouble for the sake of our common Lord and Master, whether found in our neighbourhood or in distant lands. It is in acting thus, that we evince the sin-

cerity and truth of our words, when we profess to “believe in the communion of saints;” and it is while acting thus, that we feel warmed with the same glow that burned in the Church of the primitive age, and diffused a divine light over the darkness of heathenism which surrounded it.



LECTURE XII.

PHILIPPIANS III. 1—9.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

IT is the peculiar glory of the Gospel, that it elevates man from the low estate in which he is born,—raises him as a beggar out of the mire, and places him among princes,—turns away his eyes from a miserable portion common to the beasts that perish, and bids him look upon, as his, those enjoyments which delight the angels of God.

Before the grace of God touches the heart of man, he is sadly blind to the real nature of his existence. He is thoughtless and careless of every thing but the passing moment. He is bent on mere animal pleasure. Whatever does not contribute to this, is shunned as an evil. Whatever diminishes this, is viewed as an enemy.

It is strange that any thing should be natural to man, which is unsuitable to man's nature. But so it is. It is, as we see every day, natural to man to be ardent in the pursuit of what is pleasant only for a moment. And yet man has many lessons to teach him, that the joys which for a moment delight are hereafter to procure him abundance of sorrow. So far then as regards this present life, it becomes man rather to be sad than joyful, rather to be melancholy than thoughtless.

But it is found convenient for those who bound their prospects to this present life, to banish reflection, to be so engrossed during their waking hours with amusement and play, as not to have any time to think of any thing serious that may await them either in this present life, or in that wherein mere bodily pleasure shall be for ever at an end. Such persons, even when they attend the house of God, seem to forget that they are there. They either amuse themselves by observing whatever is new or striking in the persons of those

around them, or allow their minds to dwell upon the subjects that engage them during the week, or they give themselves up to sleep; they will do any thing rather than attend to the preacher who sets before them the realities which affect man, the duties which must be attended to now, and the bliss or the woe which is in reserve for him hereafter.

It is an unwelcome duty to the preacher to be obliged to raise in the minds of any of his hearers any thought that may distress: it would be far pleasanter for him to be loved for every thing that he says: but he must be faithful to the Master whom he serves, and pitiful of the condition of those to whom he speaks. It would ill become him to be loved by the natural and unrenewed heart, only as one of the many things which minister to its present contentedness with self. Those who are careless of the evil to come, must be told of their folly; those who use themselves as if none were Lord over them, must be reminded that there is coming a day when all must render an account to Him whose we all are and whom we all should, but do not, serve. He who utters this warning voice will be hated by the giddy, as the disturber of their peace; and be despised by the worldly-wise, as an enthusiast or a fanatic. But by those who are truly wise, who have estimated the proportion between man's present and future life, he will be listened to with reverence, as the messenger of God, who comes to tell man of what is good for him, and whose counsel and advice will be found to be beneficial, in proportion as it shall be faithfully complied with.

You will observe that the persons whom St. Paul encourages to "rejoice in the Lord," are those whom he styles his *brethren*. The apostle would not have others to rejoice. To those who do not belong to the brotherhood of the saints, there is no cause for *rejoicing*. Such should rather be addressed in language of warning; "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep;" "ye have received your consolation"—your joy, pitiful and unlasting though it be, is all that belongs to you, so long as ye continue at a distance from God, and so long as ye neglect his service. But believers in Christ are *to rejoice* in their Lord; they may contemplate all the evils of the present life; and even in the prospect of the heaviest coming upon them, they may wipe off the falling tear, and say "I know in whom I have believed:" I am weak, but He is strong. I know not what may be the strength of my trial, but this I know—that it will not exceed the strength of Him who hath said, "*Cast thy burden upon me, and I will sustain thee.*" Thus does the believer prepare himself for the worst that can happen—and this is the duty of a valiant soldier. It is the ungodly man who acts the cowardly part of withdrawing his mind from human ills, until some pressing calamity touches him so closely, that he cannot escape from it: and then is he overwhelmed in a sea of trouble, from which there is none to deliver him. Far different is the condition of the believer: none has a purer enjoyment of the sweets of life than he; but yet he is not deprived of his consolation when they are taken from him. The creatures that pleased him before are gone; but the Creator is yet faithful to His promise, "*I will never*

leave thee, nor forsake thee." Earthly riches may *take to themselves wings and fly away*—but the believer can turn his thoughts to that treasure in the heavens, which remains unmoved by the changes of time. Friends whom we loved may withdraw their love; but the believer can console himself with the thought, that with His Father in heaven "*there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.*" Many with whom we now take sweet counsel may be taken from us, but they go to the mansions wherein we ourselves look for an eternal dwelling-place; and so we regard our mutual communion not as ended and gone, but as interrupted, and that only for a very short time, and then to be resumed under far happier circumstances, unalloyed by earthly imperfections, unretarded by the weakness of the flesh, and unspoiled by the thought that it may come to a close!

Has not the believer then cause *to rejoice*? If he rejoice not, who can? That which puts an end to the joy of the worldly man, turns the imperfect joy of the believer into a feeling that is complete and full of glory. It is therefore safe for him now to rejoice. "*No man can take his joy from him.*" It cannot be diminished—it can only be increased. The believer now rejoices in the Lord, as being his merciful Saviour—whom at death he is to meet, not so much as a Judge, as an Almighty Friend. This in the meantime is his hope; and though it be only hope, it yet creates joy. But oh! what will it be, who can conceive the glory that will fill the heart of the saint, after he shall have heard the welcome from the throne of the exalted Redeemer,

“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

Let believers *“rejoice in the Lord,”* because they are washed from their sins in His blood; because He hath borne their sins in His own body on the tree; because their transgressions are for ever done away, and cast as it were into the depths of the sea; because, though their misdeeds be all vividly engraven upon the tablets of their own conscience, they are all blotted out of the book of God; because they are now no longer under the wrath and exposed to the vengeance of Him *“who will by no means clear the guilty,”* but living and walking in the light of that countenance which beams upon them that are in Christ nothing but love and delight, mercy and forgiveness. Let the believer rejoice, because he is the heir to a crown of glory that fadeth not away, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give to all that now run the race set before them; because he is to exchange his present half-believing, half-doubting state for the blessed assurance which shall arise from beholding the Saviour, not any longer clothed in frail mortality as His disciples saw Him in the flesh, but *“as He is,”* radiant with glory, clothed with power, effulgent with the awful majesty of His Godhead, and attended—not only with the innumerable company of those whom He shall have redeemed out of all nations—but also with those myriads of the heavenly host, who have kept their first estate of bliss, and so do not require to participate in His mercy, but deem themselves fully blessed in being permitted to be for ever, as they have been since their creation, the min-

isters of His pleasure, and the adorers of His wonderful greatness.

Christians, ye have reason to rejoice in the Lord. Ye may "make your boast in God." On Him ye may depend; He will never deceive you. Ye are not to rejoice in yourselves, but in the Lord;—not because ye are more righteous than other men, but because God hath "chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit;" not because other men are in misery, but because God hath called you to be partakers of His own blessedness. Ye are indeed to rejoice; but take care, that what ye rejoice in be not the same thing that engages the heart of the foolish. If your joy, your chief joy do not arise from the contemplation of your state as Christians, ye have need to question as to what you are doing, whether ye be indeed "going forward" as the believer should do, or going backward to the world that ye formerly left. Consider then your privileges, your hopes, your prospects as Christians; and when ye see how great these are, and when ye think of the Lord who is the author of them all, "*rejoice*" ye in Him.

The apostle, in the previous part of this epistle, several times exhorts Christians to rejoice; and therefore it is that he here says—"*To write the same things to you, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*" From this we are to learn, that though novelty and variety be often more agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers, yet it is frequently more for the benefit of all to hear the same things that they have often heard before, and to be reminded of the very same things that they learned long ago. The truths of the gospel are few and simple; and if we give over attending to them

when we have once heard them all, we shall soon come to the end of our religious exercises. But such is the nature of religious truth, that it presents itself to us in a fresh view with every change in our personal circumstances. Many parts that seemed to have no value yesterday, appear invested with interest to-day, and what is passed by to-day, as a common pebble on the sea-beach, will be picked up to-morrow, and be seen to be, what it was, *a precious gem*.

v. 2. The apostle now proceeds to warn the Philip-pians against being led away by the false doctrine of the Judaizing teachers. The doctrine taught by these men, (as we learn from Acts, xv. 1) was, that "*unless the Gentiles,*" who believed, "*received circumcision after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved.*" As soon as this doctrine was mooted in Antioch, it caused trouble; and was justly deemed of so much importance, that it was carried for decision to the apostles and elders in the mother-church at Jerusalem. There it was unanimously condemned, as the imposing of "*a yoke upon the neck of the disciples,*" and as the subverting of their souls "*with words,*" as unauthorized by the apostles, as they were destructive of the nature of the gospel of Christ. One would have thought that this condemnation, by the very apostles whom Christ had chosen to be rulers of his household the Church, would have silenced the false teachers for ever. But no: even in spite of the condemnation of inspired apostles, those daring men went abroad among the early converts to the faith, "*troubling them with words, and subverting their souls,*" seeking to draw away disciples after themselves—anxious not to preach peace to the

troubled soul, but to become the heads of a numerous party. This is the way of the heretic and the schismatic in every age. He is continually on the alert, that he may gain proselytes to his opinion. He compasses sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, he becomes no better, but infinitely worse by the change. The heretic has no lack of zeal—he is as earnest for the collecting of disciples to his own opinion as if he were labouring for the rescue of sinners from the power of the wicked one. But there is no comfort to the penitent soul in the doctrine of the false teacher—“while he promises liberty, he himself is the slave of corruption,” and under the dominion of his fleshly nature. It is the Good Shepherd alone, who can lead you to satisfying pasture: to whom soever else the wearied penitent goes, he finds no relief—but when he comes to Jesus, he experiences that He “*hath the words of Eternal Life.*” Whosoever one goes, he is miserable, if he do not go to Christ. No wonder then that we find St. Paul so earnest in many of his epistles, cautioning believers against listening to the doctrine of those who led them away from the Saviour to trust in the law of Moses,—from Him who brought *grace and truth*, to him who denounced the vengeance of offended justice,—from Him who brought us to the glorious liberty of the children of God, to him who was only as a schoolmaster to us in the period of our childhood and minority. We are not to suppose that St. Paul depreciates the law of God as given by Moses. The moral part of it, and even the ceremonial part, so far as it can be seen to have a moral bearing, our Lord “*came not to destroy, but to fulfil;*” not to set aside, but to render more stringent; not to

despise, but to enable His disciples with greater constancy to honour in their daily life and conduct. This is clear not only from the whole teaching of our Lord Himself, but from every thing spoken and written by His holy apostles and evangelists. There is therefore no foundation for the erroneous and dangerous opinion of those, who affirm that the moral law, as found in the Old Testament, is no more binding on us Christians. The persons who St. Paul so severely condemns are those, who turn people away from Christ, and the redemption that is in Him, to trust in the ceremonies of Judaism. It might have been safe enough for a Jew, even after his becoming a disciple of Christ, to continue the practice of his former ceremonies; and this we know was done by most of the first converts among the Jews; but it was quite another thing to say, that unless the Gentile adopted the same ceremonies his faith in Christ would be of no use to Him. This was rendering weak, what the Saviour Himself had declared to be all-powerful—"Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." So said our Lord—but He made no mention of the necessity of being a Jew, before faith in Him could be of any avail. The Saviour will have us all to look to Him, without putting any medium between us and Him. We must not trust in any ceremonies that we attend to, for acceptance with God; but we must trust solely and entirely in the merits and sufferings of His Blessed Son.

The names which St. Paul applies to the false teachers are to be viewed as expressive of their nature—and not to be taken as an expression of the apostle's anger towards them. He calls them "*dogs*," because he wishes

to show us that they have not the care of the Shepherd, who preserves, but the fierceness of dogs and wolves, that scatter and devour the flock. He calls them "*evil-workers*," to show that their object is not to do good, nor to speak peace and comfort to those whom they instruct, but to gain them to themselves—and so produce evil and misery to those who allow themselves to become the victims of their enticing words. The only thing that those false teachers do is *mischief*, and therefore are they rightfully designated "*evil-workers*." They are called the *circumcision*, for the destruction which they bring about in the Church of God. They boasted that they were *the circumcision*—the only people who were bound in covenant to God; but the apostle takes this honour from them, and designates them by a name similar in sound to the one in which they boasted, but very different in meaning, yet withal bearing a meaning which very faithfully characterized those troublesome and "destructive" teachers.

The apostle next goes on to show that the persons to whom the Gospel honours belonged, were not such as boasted of outward ceremonies, but those who "worshipped God in the Spirit, who rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh." What availed the circumcision of the flesh—if the heart was yet stubborn? What availed the offering of animal sacrifices—if the affections were not consecrated to God, but given to His creatures, or to sinful pleasures?

The apostle next proceeds to show how sincere he was in giving the Philippians the advice to beware of Judaizing teachers, by exhibiting to them the little value which he set upon all the things which those false

teachers were so earnest about. It is observable that St. Paul makes out a list of *seven* articles in which he might boast as a Jew, if he were inclined to follow the example of those vain and mischief-making teachers. (1) "He was circumcised on the 8th day; (2) he was descended from the stock of Israel; (3) he was of the tribe of Benjamin, that tribe which with Judah did not, like the other *ten*, give itself up to idolatry; (4) he was not a child of parents who had been heathens, but of pure Hebrew descent, tracing his origin from the father of the faithful; (5) as touching the law, he was a Pharisee; (6) he was so zealous a Jew, that he persecuted the Church of Christ; (7) and as regarded the righteousness which the law enjoined, he was blameless." With all these things to distinguish him, one would expect him to be very jealous for his national system. But he had been led to view things very differently. When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him on his way to Damascus, his entire mind was changed. What before he esteemed highly, he now regards as loss and utterly worthless, as the mire of the streets; because all the fleshly distinctions which he enumerates, had the effect of keeping him back from Christ, and so of deterring him from the pursuit of that which alone was profitable to him. Why then should Gentile believers be told that it was necessary to be partakers of Jewish privileges, in order to be benefitted by the Gospel of Christ? Let us learn a lesson from this example. Let us beware of resting in the performance of outward forms. If the diligence with which we attend upon the forms of Christianity blind us to the fact, that we are not regulated by its power upon our hearts, we shall be

found as far from true religion, though we profess the name of Christ, as Paul was when he was a bitter persecutor of *the Church*. Let our earnest desire be to be found in Christ, not having as our only qualification our diligence in ritual and moral duties ; but may we have the righteousness which is of God by faith, which comes through the faith in Christ—and which is productive, in those who possess it, of peace and joy for the life that now is, and of a blessed immortality in the world to come.

LECTURE XIII.

PHILIPPIANS III. 10, 11.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

v. 10. "To know him." What does the apostle mean by this? Does he mean that he as yet did not know Christ, though he had so long been a preacher of His Gospel? Is he yet ignorant of the history of Jesus Christ, as we find it written by the evangelists? Has he had so much personal intercourse with the very men who were our Lord's companions when He was on earth, and is he yet unacquainted with who and what He was? No: certainly this is not what the apostle means. Such a knowledge of Christ was easily attainable. It was easy to hear and remember the narrative of the Messiah's birth, childhood, ministry, appearance before the tribunal of the corrupted Pilate, suffering on the cross, entombment by Joseph of Arimathea, rising again on the third day, making Himself visible to His disciples, and ascending into heaven forty days after His resurrection. This, we say, was easy to hear and to remember. But let us be instructed by the apostle's

words, that we may know all this, and yet not *know Christ*.

To know Christ must mean, to *know Him as our Saviour*,—to taste by *experience* what His power is in this respect. Now this is quite a different thing from the historical knowledge of Him that any one may attain, as a matter of course, and without making the efforts which St. Paul tells us, in verse 8, he made. The historical knowledge is to be attained by an effort of the intellect, and it does not even require a strong intellect to understand it : the experimental knowledge is got only by means of a penitent heart. It is told of the sons of a certain good priest of Israel, that “*they were sons of Belial,—they knew not the Lord.*” Now one would have supposed that, being priests, they could not have failed to *know the Lord* ; their very profession and occupation rendered such knowledge necessary. Yet this knowledge they did not attain. It was indeed impossible for them to *know the Lord*, in the Bible sense of that expression ; because they were sons of Belial, *i. e. profane, wicked persons*. Now, God does not communicate saving knowledge to those that live in wickedness and at enmity with Himself. Hear what the Saviour saith on this matter, (St. John vii. 17) “*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself :*” and again, (viii. 43, 44) “*Why do ye not understand my speech ? because ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*” With this agrees what is said in Ps. cxi. 10. “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : a good understanding have all they that do his command-*

ments." Without obedience to the will of God, it is clear there cannot be in any man that knowledge of God, which in Scripture is deemed of any value.

We said, Paul made an effort to attain the knowledge of Christ. And why was this necessary? It was needful, because there were many things which would have otherwise prevented him from making this desirable attainment of an experimental knowledge of Christ. He was a highly privileged Jew; adorned with every qualification in which the Jews were accustomed to boast. He might thus have been led to trust, for salvation, to his connexion with Abraham, or his obedience outwardly to the precepts of the law of Moses; and so his attention would have been called away from Him, *whose name alone is given under heaven among men by which we must be saved*. Truly, man does not go naturally to make himself acquainted with the Saviour. He, in his misery, will look to every quarter for help, rather than turn his eyes, with the Psalmist, "*to the hills, from whence alone cometh his help—even to the Lord who made heaven and earth.*" Before he does this, he must be taught by experience what the extent of his misery is, and how it is impossible to be delivered from it—by any thing that he himself can do, or devise.

How have *we* behaved in regard to this matter? Have we ever made any endeavour to attain this knowledge of Christ? Have we given one private moment to think about it? Have we stopt from the pursuit of worldly pleasure for a single hour, in order to inquire how this greatest of all acquirements is to be made? Have we esteemed all other knowledge useless, in comparison of

that with which our everlasting well-being is inseparably connected?

Perhaps some one may say—"These questions are useless. If we are not desirous to attain the knowledge of Christ, what use would there be in our reading our Bibles every day in our families; in our regular attendance at church every Sunday; in our listening to the discourses of preachers of the Word?"

To such it would be proper to reply—"All these things may be attended to, and yet no knowledge, of a saving nature, be obtained of the Lord Jesus Christ." And let not this answer of ours be deemed severe. Hear the words of our Lord Himself, (St. Matt. vii. 21—23) "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" We here see, that even although they had been diligent in His outward service, yet they were not known to the Saviour as His; i. e. they had not obtained a saving experimental acquaintance with Him. For they were "workers of iniquity"—they were not those *that did the will* of His heavenly Father.

In order to obtain the saving knowledge of Christ then, what have we done? Have we seen and deplored our sinful condition by nature? Have we thought of the eternal woe which God hath appointed as the punishment of disobedience to His laws? Have we considered that

we had rendered ourselves liable to this punishment by numerous and daily acts of disobedience? Have we viewed ourselves as lying under the just vengeance of the Almighty, which is every moment liable to fall on the unrepenting? Have we shuddered at the thought, that the wrath to come might be poured out upon ourselves? If so: then how did we escape from our dread and terror? Did we look to Him who was "*lifted up from the earth, in order to draw all men to him*?" As the eyes of the Israelites in the wilderness were in their plague directed to the *brazen serpent*, were our eyes directed to the Son of man, that we might not perish,—might not be crushed under the wrath that we dreaded as coming upon us, but, instead thereof, obtain eternal life? Did we adore the riches of God's grace, in "*making Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*?" Did we view the Saviour as our surety and our substitute, receiving the stripes that were due to us, and bearing the load of wrath, which ought to have fallen upon us, and crushed us for ever? O! then what lesson did we learn about Christ? What did we then know about Him? Did we not know Him as "*the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely*?" Did we not learn how great His love was,—how boundless His mercy,—how unspeakable His grace? Say, ye who have thus learned, if there be any love like unto that of Him who died for you!

It is easy now to see, that the knowledge of Christ is not to be attained as worldly knowledge is. And we may also see how it is, that many persons who, in other things are well-skilled, are void of this saving know-

ledge. Worldly knowledge is indeed often a drawback towards the obtaining of this knowledge. The mind of man naturally gets proud of its poor acquirements. When one has, by dint of great thinking, found out something which no one else knows, he is apt to look with contempt on the things which others are contented to know and delight in, without having exercised his intellect in order to find them out. The Gospel is announced to such a one : It appears a simple subject ; it contains little to exercise his ingenuity, little in which his boasted *acumen* would find scope ; it on the contrary contains something that levels the proud heart of man, that brings down his high looks, that makes him mourn before God as a miserable sinner (instead of being the object of his fellow-man's applause as a deep philosopher ;)—it is therefore rejected as a distasteful theme, as what may do very well for the vile and the imbecile, but is not suited to the man of learning and good manners. This man may be acquainted with the history of Christ, but he does not *know* the Lord in the sense meant by St. Paul in our text. He who *knows* the Lord also trusts in Him as a Saviour ; views Him as the High Priest entered within the veil to make intercession for His people ; thinks of Him as a King who has triumphed over His enemies, and now reigns in glory ; bows to Him as a Prophet who declares infallibly the will of God ; submits to Him as a Master who has communicated to His disciples most salutary and life-giving doctrines. There is a peculiar acquaintance formed between the soul of the believer and his Divine Lord. The Christian holds communion with his Saviour every day of his life. The Lord makes Himself known

to him by the exercise of His power in behalf of the soul that is faithful to Him. Jesus Christ is to such a one not only named, but felt to be, a Saviour,—not only called, but felt to be, a King. He rules and reigns in the heart of the believer. He speaks to the storms that agitate the troubled heart—and immediately there is a calm. He comes, when the passions rage violently, and they own His power, and submit. In the hour of sorrow and trial, when the heart is bowed down and ready to break, the Saviour appears,—and sorrow gives place to comfort, heaviness to joy, darkness to light. In the time of spiritual difficulty, when we know not whither to turn ourselves for relief, the Saviour comes—and our path is made plain—our feet are set in a sure place—we are led to run in the way of God's commandments with enlarged hearts.

In regard to Christ the apostle says, he wishes to know “*the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*” It might perhaps be difficult to determine, in what sense *power* may be spoken of in connexion with the resurrection of Christ : (1) Are we to understand the apostle as referring to the exercise of power by God the Father, in raising the Son from the dead ? This is a subject to which Paul elsewhere directs our attention, (Ephes. i. 18—20) “*That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.*” (2) Or does the apostle, by the expression in question, refer to the power

with which our Lord Himself was clothed, when, having laid down His life, "*He had power to take it again?*" This too is a view not strange to the New Testament writers: "*Him God hath raised up,*" saith St. Peter, (Acts ii. 24) "*having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*" And why was it "not possible?" Because He was the Prince of Life; because He was stronger than "*he that had the power of death, i. e. the devil.*" (3) Or does the apostle mean, by the expression "*the power of his resurrection,*" the effect which the belief of the doctrine of the resurrection has upon the minds of Christians? This we believe will agree best with the context. The words occur among others which clearly point to the practical effect which Christian doctrines have upon the heart.

If we bear in mind that the Philippians before their conversion were Greek heathens; were persons to whom the idea of the resurrection from the dead was a thing utterly unknown; were persons, very few of whom even thought of an after-life at all; were persons who were entirely engrossed with the pleasures and vanities of this present world;—if we bear this in mind, it will be easy to conceive what great *power* the doctrine of the resurrection must have exercised over their minds. In their former ignorance, they lived as the brutes that perish, and do not even seem to have complained that the length of man's present life is far too short in proportion to the greatness of the soul which dwells in his body. How must their minds have been expanded, when, from the apostle's preaching, they learned, that they had been grossly mistaken; that what they looked

upon as the whole of man's life was only its prelude,—far less in proportion to the whole, than a drop of water is to the unfathomable ocean! This doctrine would produce an entire change in the views and conduct of the Philippians. It would make them careful of their conduct, as they knew that “*all who were in their graves were to come forth; some to the resurrection of life—and others to the resurrection of damnation.*” It would raise and exalt their views as to the goodness and wisdom of the Creator, as they learned that an endless life had been allotted to man, wherein to enjoy, if he desired so to do, the favour and love of Him who gave him being, and wherein to exercise the faculties of his intellect, which, being of a nature quite different from any thing else that we know on earth, seemed unworthy of being classed among those things which come into, and go out of, existence with as much swiftness comparatively as the flight of a bird through the air. O! how miserable were the lot of man, without a knowledge of the resurrection!

Thanks be to God! we have brighter hopes to cheer us. We have been rescued from the darkness in which some of our fellow-creatures are yet sitting; and we can sympathize with St. Paul when he speaks of the “*power of the resurrection.*” We have felt what it can do in comforting our hearts at the time when they most need comfort, at the hour when those who were dear to us as our own souls were snatched from us, and put away out of our sight, in “*the house appointed for all living.*”

Among the Jews there was a dispute, as to whether there was any resurrection from the dead. Those who

were witnesses of the resurrection of Christ no longer doubt this. Christ had risen as "*the first fruits of them that sleep*;" Lazarus by the power of Christ had risen from the dead; Peter in the name of Jesus raised Dorcas to life. The apostles, filled with joy and love by the certain hope of a glorious resurrection, wherever they went, were desirous to impart to other men the blessed doctrine which was so cheering to themselves; and hence we find Paul at Athens bringing forward this doctrine prominently, in the discourse which he delivered on Mars-hill. We see in the Acts of the Apostles how much power this doctrine had on the mind of Paul; and thus he gained the thing which he so much desires in our text—a knowledge of the power of Christ's resurrection.

It may be, that the *power of the resurrection* is best shown forth in a life of holiness. The apostle joins "*the power of Christ's resurrection, with the fellowship of His sufferings*." "*Fellowship*" with Christ in "*his sufferings*" is had, when we suffer as he did, in the cause of God, in opposing sin, in testifying at the risk of temporal danger to the truth of the Gospel. We are made "*conformable to Christ in his death*," when we die unto sin. We "*know this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*." It is just in proportion as we are made like unto Christ in his sufferings and death, that we can know and experience *the power of his resurrection*. How beautifully is this expressed elsewhere by St. Paul! (Rom. vi. 3—5) "*Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*"

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Brethren, is it possible to read the words of St. Paul, representing the greatness of the change which the belief of the Gospel produces on the heart, without being led to very serious self-inquiry? May we not each ask ourselves, Has such a change ever taken place on me? If I am conscious that I once lived in disregard of God, and a life to come,—when did I begin to see my error and my danger? If I gave up my whole heart to the pleasures and amusements of the world,—when did I begin to see the folly of such behaviour? If I once viewed religion only as a theory, and matter for curious speculation,—when did I view it as a matter of the utmost practical consequence, wherein was concerned my eternal weal or woe?

Brethren, I cannot help remarking, how strange it is, that we should so often find professing Christians living exactly as the heathen, when the religion which they profess represents the life of a Christian as so entirely different from that of those, whose hopes and fears are bounded by the limits of this present life. It does not—it never can—become the Christian so to live, as that men cannot well say whether he be a Christian or no; whether he be acting on the profane maxim of heathenism—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" or whether his wish be, "so to pass through things temporal, that finally he may not lose those joys

are eternal." Let the believer show, by his life and conversation, that he believes himself to be a pilgrim and stranger on the earth. Let him not be so captivated by the pleasures of this life, that he shall not have a moment to think of the only joys that are lasting, when the fleeting pleasures of time are all for ever past. Let him shun occasionally the party of mirth and the house of feasting, and hold *fellowship*, by meditation, *with Christ in his sufferings*. Did the Saviour *suffer* for us, and must all our life be a life of gaiety? Far be the thought! This were not good for us; and He, who knows what is good for His people, takes care that this shall not be our case. "*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*" It is good for us to feel the weight of the chastening rod. We are apt to forget that we have to leave all the pleasures that we now enjoy, and so set our hearts upon,—thus forgetting the treasure which awaits us in heaven. But when we see how fragile is every earthly possession, we learn, with St. Paul, to pass "*the sentence of death against ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.*" May we, brethren, imitate St. Paul in desiring to have fellowship with and be like Christ in His sufferings, in His death, and in His resurrection. As He rose from the dead, so may we rise to newness of life. It is an object which we must strive after. It is a point to be aimed at by all means. This is the resurrection of the dead which St. Paul, in verse 11, signifies his eagerness to attain to. Most assuredly, if we do not now *attain unto this resurrection*, in the life to-come we shall rise, but it will be "*to shame and*

everlasting contempt." (Dan. xii. 2.) "*Blessed and holy is he who hath his part in this first resurrection : on him the second death shall have no power.*" (Rev. xx. 6.) Would that we were all as anxious as St. Paul was to attain unto this resurrection ! Let us be ever found desirous of living the life of new-creatures in Christ ; ever exhibiting in our life and conduct the power of the religious principles which we profess to hold ; ever ready to take up our cross, in the exercise of self-denial, and so follow Christ, and have fellowship *with Christ in his sufferings* ;—and then may we rest assured, that we shall have fellowship with Christ in a joyful resurrection, and in a glorious mansion in the kingdom of His Father :—for hear what St. Paul says to Timothy, (2 Ep. ii. 11, 12) "*It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him ; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*" This is the blessed hope, with which God's word inspires us. And as our hope is, so let our character be. Let the new life be now begun ; and that life we shall enjoy for ever. But awful indeed is the thought, that there are some who depart from this present life, totally ignorant of *that*. May God in His mercy grant that this may not be the case with any of us ! May we all know and experience the saving power of Him, who is "*the way, the truth, and the life.*" May we be made like unto Him in His moral purity, and in His love to the Father ; in His kindness and affection to His friends ; in His compassion to His enemies ; in His sympathy with the afflicted ; and in His effectual pity to the destitute. If we thus become like Christ, it will be a satisfactory proof to ourselves, that "*we have passed from death*

unto life ;" that we have died unto sin, and been made alive unto righteousness ; that we have begun to live that life of blessedness which shall not end with the dissolution of our present bodies, but then be expanded into a perfection which shall, throughout eternity, be ever approximating to the unspeakable felicity of the infinite source of Life Himself !

LECTURE XIV.

PHILIPPIANS III. 12—14.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THESE words present us with several points very well worthy of an attentive consideration. The apostle had said in the verses before, that he was very desirous to attain to a knowledge of the power of the resurrection: and he is now careful to avow that he does not yet consider himself to have completely attained the object of his desire. He wishes to teach us, by the language he uses, that we are not to believe it possible for us to attain, in this life, to a point in the Christian race, at which we may say, "We have gone far enough—we have already run a long race—we may now sit

down and take our rest." The duty and work of a Christian is to *go onward*. He is not to be satisfied with what he may have already done. He is so much captivated with the love of Christ, that he is always dissatisfied with the measure of acknowledgement which he has yet made for it. So great is the obligation under which a redeemed soul is laid to the author of his salvation, that when he has done, under the influence of gratitude, every thing which he had an opportunity of doing, he must say, "O Lord! I am but an unprofitable servant"

The injunction to us all stands plainly written in Scripture—"Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "Put ye on the new man, which is renewed in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of Him that created him." Now in this life we never can reach this standard, by which we are commanded to measure ourselves. What then is our duty? Is it to sit down in heartless despair? By no means. Although we never can reach this standard, yet are we safe only when we are *striving* to reach it. It is part of our moral nature to be discontented with present attainments. We are always looking to something future for the completion of our happiness. He who pursues the acquisition of wealth, is as little satisfied when he has amassed his *hundreds*, as he was when he had only his *tens* of thousands. He whose ambition is to attain distinction among his fellow-men, that distinction which is called *glory*, is as far from his mark when his name is associated with the fame of his country, as when he was known only in the circle of his private friends. So it is with the man who makes science his pursuit. It may be that Sir Isaac Newton

died as little satisfied with his vast attainments, as the fresh academic who has tasted for the first time the exquisite pleasure of discovering by his own observation one of the principles by which the Almighty rules in nature. This feature in our moral visage indicates to my mind something more hidden. I think we are safe in inferring that a being, who is so constituted, was intended to occupy a sphere far more enlarged and expanded than this lower world. The hopes, the views, the pursuits, the energies of man are far too great for this little earth. Three score and ten years are quite inadequate for the developement—far more for the exercise—of powers which aim at nothing less than subjecting to their controul the creation of God. At the beginning man was formed to have dominion over all things which God had made : and the destiny which awaits him is to be next and nearest of all created objects to God Himself. And how is this effected ? It is thus : Christ who is divine took upon Him our nature, *i. e.* our nature as it was before the fall, sinless and pure. So soon as we acquire the victory over sin, by faith and trust in the Saviour, and by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, so soon do we become partakers of the Divine nature. I am not now speaking at random. Hear the words of St. Peter,—“ *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord ; according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue ; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises : that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine*

nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Ep. i. 2—4.)

Man, then, by believing the Gospel, is destined to be again made like unto his Creator. We see our highest end, brethren; let us be desirous to attain unto it. It is not proper for us, to be contented with having once repented, and seen the evil of past years of forgetfulness of God, and of gratifying the pleasure of a worldly heart. "*Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection*" Ye see what a great work is before you! No less than the bringing of your heart, which at the commencement of the work of grace within you is the abode of all uncleanness, to be a fit temple for the living God! O, how should we be humbled, when we think how impure we are in comparison of what we ought to be! Verily may we say, and confess it with contrition, "*That there is no health in us; that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is nothing but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores.*" We are more diseased in soul than ever any leper was in body; and we have more reason than he to fall on the earth with our hands on our mouths, and exclaim "*Unclean, unclean!*" But, blessed be God! *unclean* though we be, there is One who can purify us; sick though we be, there is a Physician who can heal us; downcast though we be, there is One who can lay His powerful hand upon us, and raise us up.

Observe the guarded language of the apostle in the 12th verse. He concedes that it is his duty to be perfect; but he confesses that he has not yet become perfect. Lest, however, we should suppose, that we have no effort to make towards becoming perfect, he

adds—"But I follow after." I allow not the object of my pursuit to pass away from my grasp, without at least doing my best to come by it at the last. And what is it that he follows after? "*That for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus.*" He wishes to apprehend, or lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus had laid hold of him. And what was that? What else can it be—than His full salvation? We are plucked as brands from the burning, in order that we should be set as diamonds, to glitter for ever in the royal diadem of our victorious King. We are taken as fruitless plants from the wilderness, in order to be grafted upon the stock of the *good* olive tree, and bear fruit in the Paradise of God. We are taken from the slavery of Satan, in order that we may become the free citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. We are raised as beggars from the mire, in order to be placed on an honourable seat among princes. We are stripped of the vile rags with which by nature we are clothed, in order to be arrayed with the pure linen, clean and white, in which the saints above encompass "*the throne of Him that liveth for ever and ever.*" O how glorious is the object for which the Lord Jesus Christ hath apprehended us! See the difference between the miseries of earth and the felicities of heaven; consider the difference between the torment of hell—of which by nature we all are the heirs, and the joys of Paradise—in which our Lord and Saviour hath gone to prepare for us an eternal mansion; and say then, Shall we refuse to take our part in the new song to the praise of Him, "*whose right hand and holy arm hath gotten to himself the victory?*"

Observe once more the guarded language of the apostle in this verse. He might have said—“*I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I have apprehended Christ Jesus.*” But this language, although it could bear a harmless meaning, yet might be supposed to attribute to man a greater share than is due, in effecting his own salvation. This caution of the apostle is elsewhere displayed. He says to the Galatians (iv. 8, 9) “*Then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage.*” And to the Corinthians (1 Ep. viii. 3) he says, “*If any man love God, the same is known of him.*” This last passage is particularly striking; for the grammatical sequence required the apostle to say, “*If any man love God, the same knoweth God.*” Yet had this been said, there would seem to have been more honour given to man than was his due. We cannot too well bear in mind, how small a share we have in the delivering of our souls from the bondage of Satan, in making that passage which is from death unto life. The Israelites were put in possession of the land of Canaan in a manner very unprecedented in the history of conquest, and this was lest they should boast and say, “*We have got the good land by the strength of our own arm, and by the power of our own sword.*” Alike extraordinary, and more so, are the means by which the Christian is put in possession of the heavenly Canaan. The means which we are called to use, for the attainment of heaven, are apparently as inadequate as

the measures which Joshua was commanded to employ for the overthrow of the walls of Jericho. To make sure of our eternal rest in the better Canaan, we have only to put our full trust and faith in our Great Joshua, who has full power to subdue all His enemies, and “*make us more than conquerors.*”

In the 13th verse, where St. Paul says, “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended,*” he might be supposed to mean, “I do not view myself as having apprehended Christ, but Christ as having apprehended me;” and this view seems favoured by the expressions in verse 12;—but this is not the meaning of the apostle. He means rather—“I do not view myself as already in possession of that which every Christian is to strive after; I have not yet reached the goal towards which every Christian is running.” This is clear from the words that follow.

It is needful that this sentiment should take possession of the mind of every Christian. If we be satisfied with the attainments we have already made,—our diligence of course is at an end. If we think we know sufficiently well the truths of God’s word, we shall cease to study it. If we believe that we are already in possession of all needful Christian graces, we shall cease to pray for more. If we think that we are already fully sanctified, we shall no more be urgent in prayer for “*the Spirit of holiness.*” Woe be to us, if such be our sentiments! We should thus give proof, that as yet we had no adequate views of the extensive requirements of the Divine Law, of the awful depravity of the human heart, of the constancy with which the wicked one pursues the disciples of Christ, nor of the liability of man

to let slip the good which once he possessed. The poet truly says—"The path to bliss abounds with many a snare." The Saviour Himself described that path as a "*narrow way*." It is a most grievous mistake to suppose that one may go on in the life of faith, and find every thing pleasant. Our Lord said, "*Whosoever will come after me, must deny himself*." The apostle taught, that "*through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven*." There is, in league against the kingdom of the Redeemer, a most powerful host of the great adversary, and these our enemies ply their weapons against us without intermission ;—and it may be they do this with the more success from the very fact of their being invisible to us. In such a state of things, we shall do well to be of the same mind with St. Paul, and account ourselves *not yet* to have apprehended what we would attain to.

Since then we believe that we have not yet advanced so far as we must do in Christian perfection, what is to be our determination ? We must make this *one* resolution, "*To forget the things that are behind, to reach forth unto those that are before, and press toward the mark*."

In order to enter into the force of this language, we must bear in mind that the apostle is referring to the racers at the Grecian public games. He who runs a race is afraid to look *behind*, lest he lose time, and so let his competitors get before him. He looks forward to the goal, and is stimulated to greater speed by the sight of the judge seated there with the prize in his hand, which is to be conferred on the victor. The similes made use of to represent our Christian profession are very striking. Here we have a *race* ; elsewhere a *warfare* ; at another

the progress of a *grain of mustard seed* sown in the earth ; and at another the *increase of money* by using it in merchandize. Now all these similes teach us one great and important truth, *viz.* that we must, from the first moment that the Divine life breathes in us, be progressing onwards. How striking on this subject are the words of Solomon—“*The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*” (Prov. iv. 18.)

Permit me, brethren, without any fear of being deemed dictatorial, to suggest from this passage a train of thought which might be very suitable to each of us, when in the solemn hour of retirement we examine our hearts as in the sight of God. Let us ask,—“Am I making progress in holiness, as a Christian should do ? What has Divine Grace done for me as yet ? Is there yet something in my temper or disposition, which sits very unseemly on a disciple of Christ ? Is my conversation as pure and as harmless as it should be ? Is my intercourse with my fellow-men governed by the belief, that I am continually watched by an all-seeing God ? Do I behave towards my Christian brethren with that charity which the Word of God enjoins ? How do I manage my family ? Is there any thing deficient here ? Do I leave something undone which I ought to do for the good of my children, or of my servants ? Or am I faulty in the conduct of my profession and worldly calling ? Does Christian principle exercise its proper influence here ? If I have wealth, how do I bestow it ? Can I at last give with comfort an account of my stewardship ?” After such a scrutiny, if we find that in any one thing we are lacking,—let us resolve, with the

gracious aid of the Divine Spirit, to have the lack supplied. If we will but humble ourselves so far as patiently to contemplate our deficiencies, I have no doubt, we shall soon be in the way of amendment. "*If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth unto all liberally and upbraideth not.*" Brethren, I need not be deemed upbraiding, although I assert that we have all much need to make advances. We are all far, far from the standard which we should and might attain. We are not decided enough as Christians. There is not a distinction marked enough between us and those who know not God. We are therefore not beyond the need of taking an advice, receiving a friendly hint, listening to a kind exhortation from one another. Let us all strive to exemplify fully the power of faith in our life and conduct. And wherein we see that we are behind our brethren, let us not envy them, but strive to be like them ; let us not justify our own sloth, but rather copy their zeal and activity ; not seek to detract from their virtues by exaggerating their failings, but rather humble ourselves by the thought that we have fewer of the former, and more of the latter, than they.

We shall do well to bear in mind, that between the least and the most advanced Christian there are numberless degrees of progress ; and also, that Christ confers upon His people an endless variety of graces. This will be useful for a twofold purpose :—1. For gaining proper views of *our own* state. It would cause us great grief, if we looked to a very advanced Christian, and concluded, from our own evident inferiority to him, that we as yet are no Christians at all. It is possible for one to be very earnest and diligent in the service of

his Divine Lord, and yet be far inferior to another to whom more grace hath been vouchsafed. The safe thing is in this case to be in the attitude described in the text,—“*forgetting the things that are behind,*” as not worth remembering, “and pressing to those that are before.” 2. For gaining proper views of the state of others. Young disciples are exceedingly apt to judge rashly of their brethren. They readily judge others by their own standard. All must have felt the pangs of penitence, and the joy of faith, precisely as they did, or else they are concluded to be yet in an unconverted state. All must enjoy precisely the same spiritual exercises that they delight in, or else they are deemed to be yet living in worldly-mindedness. Let us remember, that the One Spirit hath many gifts; and that God hath spread abroad a vast variety of flowers as well in His moral, as in His physical creation. We behold some remarkable for their personal piety and devotedness, others distinguished for their zeal in seeking the good of their fellow-men; some famed for the exercise of charity in offices of kindness to the sick and destitute, others adorned by deeds of liberality given by the promptings of a bountiful rather than a tender heart. In all these cases let us admire the riches of God’s grace, and not judge our brother harshly, because he may not possess each and all of the graces by which he might be distinguished.

In the 14th verse the apostle speaks of *a prize*. We are not to suppose from the use of this expression, that eternal life is bestowed as a *reward*, in the strict sense of that term. The apostle himself hath taught us, “*that eternal life is the gift of God,*” “*freely*”

bestowed, given "*by faith*," and "*not for works of righteousness which we have done*." It hath pleased God, however, frequently in Scripture to represent the salvation of our souls as a *prize*. This is no doubt for the purpose of teaching us, that although we are saved solely by His power and grace, yet it is not without an effort on our part. Men do not go to heaven whether they will or no. Jehovah does not lavish His mercy on those who stubbornly refuse it. "*Ye will not come unto me*," saith the Saviour to the obstinate Jews, "*that ye might have life*;" i. e. "*Ye are not willing to come unto me, therefore ye cannot have life*." If by faith we run the Christian race, there will be a prize bestowed at the end of it; if we manfully fight the good fight, there will be given the crown of righteousness; if we remain "*faithful unto death, there will be given a crown of life*." Thus, in order to quicken us in the pursuit of holiness, the Lord hath joined together, as things not to be separated, the pleasing Him now with the seeing Him in glory and bliss hereafter.

The apostle calls the Christian calling a *high calling*. This may be for either of these three reasons:—1. Because the voice which calls us effectually to become saints is *from on high*. 2. Because the state to which we are called is a state of glory *high in the heavens*. Or 3. Because the calling to be a disciple of Christ is the *most honourable* to which we can be called in this life.

Which of these three senses we are to give to the passage, or whether it may not bear them all, it is difficult to determine. At all events, either of them is fully borne out by other passages of Scripture. Let us, brethren, in conclusion, lay to heart the great dignity

of our profession as Christians. May God grant us the power to be watchful, lest we ever disgrace our holy profession by such a course of conduct as would be unworthy of it. Let our desire be to go on from weakness to strength ; not to be contented with past attainments ; to desire more spiritual knowledge, more humility of mind, more reverence for God and divine things, more warmth of love to the Saviour, and more constant charity to our Christian brethren. Thus shall we become more and more “ *meet for the inheritance of the saints*” who dwell “ *in light ;*” and when we shall have completed the course appointed for us to run below, the Lord the righteous Judge will give us the prize of our high calling, viz. “ *a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*’

LECTURE XV.

PHILIPPIANS III. 15—21.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded : and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this even unto you. Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ : whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

THIS passage contains one or two things which require to be cleared up a little in order that we may have a satisfactory view of the subject so very important herein

set before us by St. Paul. It will be best for us to offer our remarks, on the various expressions which require to be explained, in the order in which they occur.

v. 15. Presents us with something like a disagreement with what we read in the 12th verse. In verse 12, St. Paul avows that he as yet is not *perfect*; and here he says, "*Let us, as many as are perfect, be thus minded*;" hereby clearly putting himself into the class which he denominates *perfect*. Now in order to understand this, so as not to view the apostle as contradicting himself, we have only to observe, that the same word *perfect* must be used in different senses. And we may remark, by the way, that it is not an unusual thing in the Scriptures, to find the use of a certain word in one sense suggesting the use of the same in quite a different sense. A remarkable instance of this is the famous saying of our Lord's—"Let the dead bury their dead," in which the word *dead*, in the beginning of the sentence, means those who are figuratively *dead*, viz. those who are so entirely taken up with the affairs of the world that they have no time for religious duties; and again, the same word in the end of the sentence means the *dead* literally.

I shall not produce any more instances to show that Scripture sometimes, in the very same passage, uses words in very different senses, so as to cause embarrassment to the unskilful reader; but believing that this will readily be admitted by you, I would go on to inquire into the different senses in which the word *perfect* appears in the New Testament.

1. The word translated *perfect* may be rendered in general by the word *mature* or *completed*. One would

be *perfect* in this sense when, after certain preparatory steps, he was judged fitted or qualified for being elected to some office, or admitted to some privileges. Accordingly the word *perfect* might be used to denote the *initiated*, in opposition to those who were but learners of the Christian doctrine. This is evidently the sense of the word in Heb. vi. 1, where the apostle says—“Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance,” &c. The principles which he proposes to leave are the elements of the Christian religion, which it was proper for babes in Christ to be engaged about ; the perfection to which he proposes to go on was the higher degree of Christian knowledge, which it was proper to expect of those who had, after sufficient training, been admitted by the rite of baptism to the full privileges of Christian fellowship. In order to set this view of the word *perfect* fully before us we read Heb. v. 11—14, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be understood, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, (or *perfect*, as it is properly rendered in the margin) *even* those who by reason of use (or habit) have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

In this sense of the word *perfect*, St. Paul uses it in 1 Cor. ii. 6, saying, “We speak wisdom among them

that are *perfect*." If this passage be carefully compared with its context, it will be found that the apostle uses these words by way of apology, for the simplicity of the language and teaching which he used on his first visit to Corinth. He might be regarded as saying—"It is true that when I first preached the Gospel to you, I used great plainness of speech, because I determined not to make known any thing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was enough for you then to have heard the mere elements of Gospel truth. But although my teaching among you was so simple, yet you are not to suppose that it is equally meagre in all places to which I go. On the contrary, when I am among those who since their baptism have become *mature* in their religious knowledge, I then accommodate myself to their enlarged capacities, and among them speak *wisdom*; yet not the wisdom of this world. . . . but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."

2. The word *perfect* is used in the sense of the word *dead*. In this sense it is frequently found in the elegant Greek authors. When a Christian dies, he completes his warfare, he accomplishes his task, he finishes his course: he also ends his probation, finishes the period during which he is a candidate, and so is admitted to the higher degree of glory and happiness to which the Lord calls His faithful disciples who have been contented to sit His appointed time in the low room assigned to them while on earth. For an instance of the word in this sense, we must again go to the epistle to the Hebrews. In Chap. xii. 22, 23; we read, "Ye are

come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made *perfect*." Again in Chap. v. 8, 9. we read of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made *perfect* (*i. e.* having *finished* his earthly life, and entered again the world of glory,) he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Similar to this are the words in St. Luke, xiii. 32, "Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be *perfected*;" *i. e.* I shall finish my course on earth.

3. We meet a *third* use of the word *perfect* in the New Testament, which seems to be borrowed from the Old Testament. This is seen in such texts as these, "Be ye *perfect*, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—"If thou wilt be *perfect*, keep the commandments." This we may regard as equivalent to *sincerely good*; decidedly engaged on the side of *virtue*; unfeignedly and completely a lover of godliness.

Not to enlarge any more on this matter, we may now remark, that the first of these three senses is evidently the one in which it is used in verse 15 of our text; while the second of these senses is as evidently that in which it is used in verse 12, preceding our text. Thus explained, all appearance of contradiction between these two verses entirely vanishes.

You are perhaps aware, that a certain sect of Christians (*i. e.* the Wesleyans) have been induced to hold,

from such an expression as occurs in the 15th verse, that the people of God on earth are to be divided into two such classes,—that the one certainly believe and have many good qualities, but yet many failings; while the others, by the power of faith and the assistance of the Divine Spirit, are become absolutely faultless, and free from every sin. Of this tenet it is enough to say in its condemnation, that it is opposed alike to Scripture and to daily observation. Where in all the Bible do we read of a *perfect* man? Where in all the Bible do we find a promise that men shall ever while on earth be *perfect*, in this sense of absolutely faultless? And where did any of us in all the world meet a man who was *perfect*, in the sense of being free from sin, and endowed with all necessary virtues? 'Tis idle and absurd to teach doctrines which every one who has eyes sees to be at variance with fact. Indeed so utterly unfounded is this doctrine, that we ever find the most advanced Christians the most forward to acknowledge their own demerits and deficiencies. Up to the latest hour of his existence the most pious believer will find it needful to use the petition—"Forgive us our trespasses." And he will, even at that hour, for his most solid comfort meditate on the words—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

We may summarily dismiss this false opinion by declaring, that this use of the word perfect in the *sense* of being absolutely free from sin, is a sense entirely modern, and not once to be found in the whole compass of the Sacred Writings.

We therefore regard the apostle in our text as saying to the Philippians, "Let such of you as have attained to

a complete knowledge of Christian doctrine consider with me, that it is our duty to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." You observe he says *be thus minded*; and if we enquire *how minded*, the answer will be, "minded" in the manner set forth in the foregoing verses. And then he adds, "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this (or this also) unto you;" *i. e.* God shall show you that, notwithstanding all your acquirements and privileges which now procure you the character of perfect, this constant advancing forward in the Christian race is a duty incumbent upon you. Brethren, does not the apostle here hint to us, that the Lord is ready to teach us those points of our duty wherein He sees we are deficient? This indeed is a gracious dispensation in which He hath placed us—this truly is a merciful way of dealing with us! But how is it that He will reveal or teach to us our deficiencies? He will teach us by His Word. When we consult this as an oracle, which we always should do, we shall every day be discovering something or other which we did not know before. And He will also teach us by the dispensations of providence through which He will make us pass; adversity, tribulation, and bodily afflictions will make us wise as to our duty to God.

The connection of the 16th verse with the 15th seems to be this: "Be it that in some important points ye are still deficient; yet ye have made very considerable advances, such advances in the knowledge of the gospel, and of your duty as Christians, that I shall be very well contented even if ye walk by the same rule, and

mind the same thing as ye had delivered to you at the first, and as ye guided your lives by, when I was yet among you." It is a duty no doubt to advance both in knowledge and in virtuous conduct; and this duty all Christians ought by all means to accomplish: but in a time of general defection from sound doctrine and holy living, it is even a cause of joy to a faithful servant of Christ, that his flock are not carried away with the current; he may console himself that they have not deserted their former *rule*, nor begun to *mind* other *things*, even though they may not appear to be making much progress forward.

In the 17th verse, St. Paul might by some be charged with arrogance and self-conceit. It may seem strange that this man, pious and devoted and zealous as he was, should have had so high an opinion of himself as to exhibit himself as a pattern to others. Now it may readily be granted, that if the apostle spoke this with reference to moral conduct, and meant, "Be ye as holy and as faultless, as amiable in disposition, and as pure in behaviour as I am," then there might be good reason to suspect him of being lifted up with spiritual pride. But of this the apostle will be entirely acquitted, when we show that he refers not to his moral conduct, but to his doctrine,—to the manner in which he taught the truths of the Gospel. If he was inspired, as we know he was, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, surely there was no arrogance or self-conceit in advising them to hold fast by the doctrines which he taught them. For to be followers of him in this sense was to be followers of Christ, who sent His Holy Spirit to qualify him as a teacher. In order to show you that the ex-

pression in question is naturally to be explained in this manner, I invite your attention to 1 Cor. iv. 15—17, where we read—“Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel. Wherefore I beseech you *be ye followers of me*. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I *teach* every where in every church.”

It is very clear, from the apostle's going on in the 18th and 19th verses to allude to false teachers, that his call to the Philippians to be followers of him regards the following of him in doctrine. Still it might be quite right to commend himself to the Philippians as an example of holy living. They, before their conversion, were probably most of them polluted with all the uncleanness of heathenism. And it might be a matter of some difficulty to them, to ascertain in all cases how their conduct should be regulated in order to conform to the new religion into which they had been introduced. In this case there would be nothing improper in the apostle's saying to them—“The Lord Jesus Christ whom I serve hath instructed me in the truths of His religion—He hath also given me His Holy Spirit, whereby I have been guided in the way of holiness—Ye may therefore be very safe in conforming yourselves to the model which I presented in myself, when I lived among you.” And in this spirit we find him saying to the Corinthians (1 Ep. x. 31—xi. 1) “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to

the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God : even as I please all *men* in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*”

We ought to thank God, brethren, not only for the doctrine which Christ and His inspired apostles taught, as a rule of our faith, but also for the bright example of holiness and virtue which they left behind them for us to follow. Let the former be always the standard by which we measure every thing offered to us as religious truth ; and the latter the standard by which we frame our manners and behaviour. We shall become *heretics* if we neglect the one, and *ungodly* if we lose sight of the other.

We have already *so far* anticipated the 18th and 19th verses by saying, that in these the apostle alludes to the false teachers. The apostle says, he had often before told the Philippians about these teachers. He had alluded to them with great vehemence of mind at the beginning of the Chapter ; and perhaps he had often spoken of them, and warned them against being seduced by them while he was yet his converts at Philippi. If we compare the language here used with what we find in Romans xvi. 17, 18, we shall be quite satisfied that it is to the false teachers he is referring in the words under consideration. He there says—“ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them. *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ;* and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

If we desire to know in what sense these false teachers might be said to be enemies of the cross of Christ, we shall understand this by the following passage :—"As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised ; *only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.* For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law ; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory save in *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians vi. 12—14.) To see the full bearing of these words, we have only to call to mind that the false teachers in question taught, that unless the Gentiles submitted to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, the belief of the Gospel would be of no avail to them. Thus the value of the atonement, or the preaching of the cross of Christ, was rendered vile in the eyes of those, whom they went about to deceive with their pernicious words.

Well might Paul weep, when he thought of those dangerous men. They were as grievous wolves, that entered into the fold to *kill, to scatter, and to destroy.* They subverted the souls of those whom they addressed. They led them away from the true object of confidence, to lean on a broken reed, which bent, and broke, and lacerated them that trusted to it. No greater injury could be inflicted upon us than destroying our faith and trust in the Redeemer, who is the true source of peace, and making us to confide in some ritual observance, that "*can never make them that do such service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.*" Errors in doctrine are by some in our day held to be of small

moment. Such persons can have no sympathy with Paul in his tears on account of false teachers. Who is likely to be in the right, they or he? It is indeed a superficial system of pretended philosophy, that would represent the doctrine which one held on religious matters as of no importance. We have no reason to expect holiness of life, where we do not find soundness in the faith. Whatever men may pretend to, we shall not trust them. We know, both by the word of God, and the page of impartial history, that unsound doctrines in religion always, like corrupt trees, produce the corrupt fruits of vice and immorality; and we also know from the same sources, that wherever the truth of the Gospel is held in its purity it is ever accompanied with a pleasing amount of godly, benevolent, and virtuous deeds. Knowing this, can we cease to grieve with St. Paul, when we see error on religious matters making progress in our nation? May God grant mercy to such as have gone astray, and recall them from their error; and may He make us all duly careful of what we hear and read; lest we ourselves be led away from the simplicity of the apostolic doctrines which have been delivered to us!

St. Paul tells us enough about these false teachers, to induce us to stand aloof from them. *Their end is destruction.* They shall not be saved, but lost themselves; how then should they be safe guides to lead us to heaven? *Their god is their belly.* They care for nothing, but what may minister to the gratification of bodily appetites. They seek only their own temporal enjoyment; to this they give up all the affections of their heart, and in it there is no place left for the Living

God. And as they have turned their backs on Him, He will hide His gracious face from them. Should we not then avoid their company, as Moses directed the people to avoid the company of Korah, which the earth was to swallow up alive? *Their glory is in their shame.* They make a boast of the success with which they gain proselytes; but of this one day they will bitterly repent, when they shall have to answer to God for being the instruments of Satan in deluding people to their everlasting ruin. Should we not then beware, lest we fall into the same condemnation? *They mind earthly things.* They have their portion in this short life. "They have received their reward." All the good that belongs to them is the short-lived good of this present world. They mind not, and therefore they have no interest in, the things above. They care not for the joys of heaven; and therefore they shall never taste them. May we not then say of them as Jacob on his death-bed said of his sons Simeon and Levi:—"O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." From modern errors of Puseyism and Popery on the one hand, and Socinianism and Infidelity on the other, it is my heart's desire and fervent prayer, that I and all my brethren in this country may be ever preserved!

By way of contrast to the false teachers, St. Paul tells us in v. 20. he had *his conversation in heaven*; i. e. while they gave their minds and thoughts to earthly things, he was engaged about, was conversant in, things of another and better world. He despised the comforts and pleasures of this world, in order that he might be an instrument of saving sinners, by declaring to them

the forgiveness of their sins through the merits of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He made light of the sufferings and trials to which he was exposed on earth, because he had ever the eye of his faith fixed on the crown of righteousness which was laid up for him in heaven. He indeed lived as a *citizen* of heaven, even when on earth—he appeared as a pilgrim among men. Here he had no city—but he looked for one that was to come. This is the proper view of the words—“*our conversation is in heaven.*” For here, as in modern English, *conversation* does not mean *speech*, but the conduct or privileges of a *citizen*. Now, brethren, let us bear in mind, that what Paul says here of himself is true of all real Christians, they mind not earthly things—but they behave as the citizens of heaven. And this is a very serious point for our reflection; for if we be not living as citizens of heaven, we have cause for passing judgment against ourselves, as having a name to live while we are dead.

Why is it, brethren, that Christians are said to be *citizens* of heaven? Because Christ our head hath ascended up there, and there reigns a Prince and victorious King; and because, to use the beautiful language of the Collect for the Sunday after Ascension-Day, we expect to be “exalted unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.” We, who are on earth, look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall come to do great things for us. As surely as He went up into the heavens, in the presence of His faithful disciples, so surely shall He come again to the earth; He shall come with ten thousand of His holy ones; He shall come with clouds, and every eye shall

see Him. When such a glorious sight shall appear, then shall the full redemption of His people draw nigh. Their souls now go at death to be with Him in Paradise, while their bodies are committed to the tomb. But when He shall appear, our bodies and souls shall again be united, and we shall in this complete state go “to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.”

He shall change our vile body. Do not suppose that Paul is here speaking with contempt of the Christian’s body. The words in the original express no contempt ; they stand thus—“*who shall change the body of our humiliation.*” This is said by way of contrast to the glorious body of Christ, or “body of His glory,” as it is in the original, like which it is to be made, when Christ shall appear the second time from heaven. Our present bodies are indeed *humiliated*—they have been brought low by sin, by using them as instruments of unrighteousness ; they have been brought low by numerous diseases and troubles ; they have been defiled with the wrinkles of care and grief ; and at length they will be brought very low—oh ! let the proud sons of earth remember this—they will be brought so low as to become the prey of the worm ! But why should the believer shrink from realizing this truth ? These humiliated bodies are one day to be made like unto Christ’s glorious body. *His* body is immortal, so shall *ours* become. His body is fitted for the glorious mansions of heaven, so shall ours be fitted. His body is free from all future pain and trouble, so surely shall ours be rendered free. Let no doubts trouble our minds on this deeply important, this vital Christian doctrine. For

though this be a great work, remember it is to be done by One that cannot fail to accomplish His promises for want of power; for it is to be done by Him who at first gave a being to us, and all other parts of the visible and invisible creation—by Him, by whom, and for whom are all things—even by Him “*who is able to subdue all things unto Himself!*”

LECTURE XVI.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 1—7.

Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

BY the word *therefore*, in verse 1, a connection is intimated between what is said in the preceding chapter and the exhortation here given—*Stand fast in the Lord*. In the 3rd chapter, the apostle had cautioned the Philip-

prians to beware of false teachers, by representing to them the nature of those teachers, and the worthlessness of their doctrine. He had also shown them the way in which he held the precious doctrines of the gospel; and, in the warmth enkindled in his mind by a contemplation of the subject, he had given utterance to some sublime truths connected with the gospel, which it must ever be a pleasure to all Christians to read. And now, with all the affection of a spiritual father to his converts, he entreats them to *stand fast in the Lord*. He may be regarded as saying, "Ye thus see what a delightful state of mind is brought about by believing the pure doctrines of the Gospel. How great are our hopes! How lively and energetic our pursuits after holiness! How sweetly constraining is the love of Christ! How much is offered to us in exchange for the poor considerations in which we once confided! Ye know from what ye now learn of me, whom even in my imprisonment the Gospel renders happy, the blessedness of those who have given themselves up to the service of God, by believing the record concerning His Son. As ye contemplate their glorious objects of hope, as ye view the enlivening power of their faith, as ye think of the delightful exercise of their love,—count yourselves peculiarly blessed, view yourselves honoured of God, in being called to form part of that privileged body. Think, I beseech you, so highly of your present condition, as disciples of Christ, that it may never occur to your minds to fall away from it. As ye have been taught in the principles of the Christian faith, so continue to hold them. As ye have been grafted in the Lord who is the *true vine*, so *stand fast* in him."

Brethren, this exhortation is not unnecessary for us. We are beset with many things which endanger our stability in the faith. We are in danger of being driven about hither and thither by the various winds of doctrine which from time to time set in against us. We run great risk of having our faith shaken by the improper conduct of those who make great pretensions to superior sanctity of life. When the iniquity of professing Christians abounds, the love of many waxes cold. And sometimes we are tempted to despise the simple doctrines of the Gospel, by the smooth enticing words of some unbeliever who comes to us with a great show of candour, and of philosophical gravity. The proper remedy for these numerous evils is to recount to our own souls the numerous privileges of the Christian, and, as we see their excellence, to resolve to *stand fast in the Lord*. Whatever teachers present themselves, none can ever speak comfort to us with such a winning voice, and with such heart-touching power, as He who said—"Come unto me, all ye that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." We shall no doubt be ready to say with St. Peter—after duly estimating the comparative value of all rival teachers—"To whom, Lord, shall we go but unto thee? for thou hast the words of eternal life!"

Let us, therefore, *stand fast in the Lord*. Never let any beguiling enticements of the world make us regret that we have chosen His service as our principal occupation. The world, indeed, has fair promises to make, and it exhibits a pleasant show. But in its promises it proves false, and in its pleasures unsatisfying. In the service of the Lord, we shall have comfort and support,

even when it is most arduous and trying, and the reward therefore shall be made sure to us, even a crown of glory that fadeth not away!

We see in this 1st verse how very kindly the apostle expresses himself. His very soul is melted with love to those whom he had been the means of turning to the Lord. Who could refuse advice, when coming from such a dear friend as this? The language of Scripture, if duly weighed, cannot but touch our hearts. The servants of God are disinterested in their urgent entreaties to us to trust in His mercy, and walk in His ways. We may here learn, from the example of St. Paul, in what spirit we should set about doing good to our fellow-men. If we assail their ears with harsh rebukes, we shall never succeed. We must really first love them, and exhibit this love; and then we may expect to produce an impression. No man should ever venture to give advice, until he really loves, and is able to show that he loves, those to whom he would tender it. This applies to parents in counselling their children. If they would have their lessons either respected or followed, they must be very careful to mix love with every thing they say by way of advice to them.

The apostle addresses the Philippians by a very remarkable title. He calls them his "*joy and crown.*" This suggests to us a beautiful idea. He was pleased with the acquisition he had made by bringing them to a knowledge of the Gospel, as much as if he had conquered a nation, and won to himself a kingdom. When all the kings of earth shall have long laid aside their *diadems*, and when their purples shall have long been moth-eaten,—the *crown of joy* shall be seen to glitter

on the apostle's head. For ever in the kingdom of God it will be a delight to him to meditate on the numerous trophies that he won for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And that joy to him will be so great, as to sweeten the recollection of all the toils he had to undergo, in order to bring about the salvation of his converts. Ah, yes! that prisoner, bound to the soldier that keeps him, has a joy filling his heart, and a crown surrounding his head, which the Emperor that confines him might well envy; but which all the arts of his flattering attendants, and all the productions of his vast dominions, can never procure. Nero in his palace, encompassed with all his imperial grandeur, is destitute of the happiness, is a total stranger to the joy, of the humble prisoner whom he vainly supposes to be dependent for his happiness on his tyrannical will. At the awful day, when Nero shall appear a trembling culprit before the Judge of all, to answer for his numerous inhuman crimes, he shall see him whom he once held a prisoner, wearing a crown as an assessor to condemn him!

The apostle begins in the 2nd verse to refer to special matters between the Philippians and himself. From his advice to Euodias and Syntyche, to *be of the same mind in the Lord*, we may infer that he had learned, probably from the messenger whom the Philippians had sent to him, that their peace was somewhat endangered by the difference of opinion between these two persons. Who these were, and what position they occupied in the church at Philippi, we have no means of learning. It is likely that Euodias was some influential man, and Syntyche some influential woman, to

whom the other members of the church looked up, for their kind services among them. Whoever they were, it is clear that they had a quarrel together, to which the apostle wished to put an end.

It is impossible for men to agree in every thing. Even when they are quite united on the most important subjects of the Gospel, they may still view many things in such different lights, as to cause the one to consider the other as chargeable with error. And in nothing is a difference of opinion so certain to produce alienation of affection as in Religion. This of course arises from the earnestness with which all sincere Christians entertain every thing that they look upon as Divine Truth. When we see a man so easy about what he professes to believe, as not to appear moved when he sees his principles called in question, or warm in the advocacy of what he believes to be truth, when he sees it assailed,—then we conclude that such a man is not in earnest in what he professes.

Now, it is possible to be quite sincere in our faith, and yet at the same time take heed to the spirit of the apostolic advice—*to be of the same mind in the Lord*. We can clearly express our consent with one another in those truths which are so plain that all admit them. We can look upon another with brotherly love, in consequence of our union on these points of a vital nature. And regarding other matters as less important, and so less manifest, when we find that we differ in judgment, we can maintain a prudent silence. Points of dispute should be kept as much as possible out of view. It is very hurtful to the peace of a Christian to be involved in discussion with one who believes in the same Saviour,

and serves the same Lord. The effect of religious controversy in a Church is like that of the east wind in a garden in spring ; it withers and cuts off the pleasant tender buds, which are so lovely to look upon.

In verse 3, it is not certain who is the person addressed under the title of St. Paul's *true yoke-fellow*. The famous Dutch commentator Grotius conjectures that it was Epaphroditus that was thus designated. But the objection to this is, that there was no reason to write to him such a message as is here given, since he was present with St. Paul when he wrote this epistle (of which he was the bearer,) and so might get all his injunctions by word of mouth. It is more likely therefore that the person addressed as Paul's *true yoke-fellow* was some other man, united with Epaphroditus in the pastoral care of the converts at Philippi.

This person, whoever he was, has authority in the affairs of the Church, and so he is commanded to use it in procuring assistance of those pious women who had laboured with him in the Gospel. They seem to have been members of the Church at Philippi. They had probably spent all their worldly goods, and rendered themselves obnoxious to their unbelieving relations, and therefore dependent on the bounty of their brethren, by their unremitting and zealous attentions to Paul, when he preached the Gospel among them. In these circumstances, they would have a peculiar claim on the attention of their brethren. Their position was indeed an honourable one. They had put all their worldly fortune in jeopardy for the love they had to the Saviour. They must not then be overlooked, but made to ex-

perience the strength and sincerity of Christian sympathy and love.

The latter part of the third verse, which some have been at a loss to connect, may be joined to what goes before in this manner:—“*I entreat thee, true yoke-fellow, give assistance to those women who laboured in the Gospel with me, with Clement, and with my other fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.*” As if he had said, “Ye have been mindful of myself, and of Clement, and of my other faithful companions in the preaching of the Gospel: I pray you, be not unmindful of those women who encountered such a conflict, in order to help us in accomplishing our ministry.”

It is impossible to fix precisely what is the meaning of the sentence referring to Paul's fellow-labourers—“*whose names are in the book of life.*” It may be viewed by some, as a statement of the election of those men to be heirs of eternal life. But would not this be too bold a thing to tell any man before he died, that his name certainly was written in heaven as one for whom salvation was determined by an unchangeable God? Not to enter at present on an enquiry as to the Scriptural view of election, so as to contrast it with the erroneous statements on the subject so often made in this country,—I have only to say, that the sentence in question cannot be meant to refer to *such* an election as this of Paul's fellow-labourers; for there is no reason why he should tell the Philippians of the election of those men, any more than about his own, or that of Clement. May we not then suppose, that while he particularizes himself and Clement, he also intends to

particularize his fellow-labourers, and so calls them those "others whose names are in the book of life;" thereby indicating, that they have gone to their heavenly rest, and have their names now no longer mentioned on earth, but enrolled in the list of those who already enjoy eternal life? This is the only view of the words which I can regard as satisfactory.

The language here is undoubtedly figurative. We cannot suppose that there is any necessity for books in heaven. The Almighty is not liable as mortals are to any infirmity of memory. The idea of a *book* must have occurred to the mind of the Apostle from the practice, so familiar among his countrymen, of registering all the names of the Jewish people in the records of their respective tribes. As certainly as every Jew could claim a portion in his tribe, in consequence of his name being recorded in the register of that tribe; so surely shall every believer get his portion in the heavenly Canaan, in consequence of his name being written in the heart of the Saviour that gave His life for him.

If in ancient times the names of all the citizens of a town were inscribed in the Register of that town, then to have one's name written in that Register, and to become a citizen of that town, would be synonymous terms. In like manner, and parallel to this idea, to have one's name written in the book of life, which is, by a figure of speech, supposed to be kept in the heavenly city, would be viewed as equivalent to one's beginning to be an inhabitant of that city, wherein they that dwell can alone be said to *live* truly, as their's is a life that cannot end by death.

Let it be our desire, brethren, to have all our names inserted in this book of life. What matters it, how few our honours, how circumscribed our privileges may be, while in this changing world? We shall ere long forget all our present meanness and obscurity, when we shall be exalted to associate with the noble saints in heaven,—“*the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.*”

In verse 4, the apostle repeats, and with double urgency, the injunction which he had given before (in iii. 1,) saying, “*Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.*” They and we might well *rejoice*, when he was so joyful, adverse as his worldly circumstances then were. The heathen philosophers boasted in their ability to remain unmoved, in the midst of any amount of affliction or adversity that might come upon them. But surely none of them ever were so able to bring good out of evil as the heroic apostle, who at the time of his greatest peril could himself *rejoice*, and call upon his friends to *rejoice* with him. I do not think that Christians ought to expect to be always so happy in mind as to be able to *rejoice*. Must they not sometimes mourn for their own short-comings? And must not their tears sometimes run down, for the sins ‘of the daughter of their people?’ Yes, truly, seasons of mourning will often come. ‘The changes and chances of this mortal life’ will also frequently cause them grief and sorrow. But it is the nature of the Gospel to administer such a mitigation of this sorrow in them that believe it, that their sorrow when compared with that of an unbeliever may truly be called joy. When the Christian thinks of his happy condition as reconciled unto God by the

death of His Son, and as being prepared to meet whatever may be appointed for him, either a late or an early departure from this life,—he has abundant reason to *rejoice*. Let our hopes of glory be bright, let our faith be lively, let our love to God and to one another be pure and fervent—and then shall we be ready to *rejoice*. Whether we be poor or rich, whether we be in sickness or in health, whether in obscurity or honour among men,—we shall possess a joy in our souls, of which no man can deprive us.

The exhortation in the 5th verse, "*Let your moderation be known unto all men,*" may or may not be connected with the 4th. If it be, as I believe it is, we are to view the apostle as enjoining a temperate, chastened joy, something in contrast to the boisterous joy of the heathen. Such a joy as does not cause its voice to be heard in the streets, as is not demonstrated in processions, and noisy gatherings of the people,—but known by the contented smile, and the cheerful countenance, even while exposed to trials, and never more loudly exhibited than is necessary in the singing of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Thus, we find the apostle giving us a caution against allowing ourselves to be carried away with fanatical enthusiasm, at the time when we meditate with joy on all the happy and blessed prospects which constitute the Christian's earthly portion. If we think how often men have been driven into every kind of wild extravagance, by giving the reins to a heated religious imagination, this exhortation will not appear an unnecessary one.

The last clause of the 5th verse, "*The Lord is at hand*," appears altogether unconnected; yet, I believe, this is said chiefly as a reason for the command in verse 4, to *rejoice in the Lord*. The apostle may here be regarded as recalling the idea in the end of the 3rd chapter, where the promise—the joy-inspiring promise—is given, that "the Lord Jesus Christ shall come from heaven, to change these humiliated bodies of ours, and make them like to His own glorious body. Frequently does the apostle as here cheer his own heart, and that of his fellow-Christians, by the hope of the second appearing of our Lord. This hope enabled them to bear with constancy and with joy all the troubles to which they were exposed in the time of persecution. The Lord however did not come again in their lifetime: their deliverance nevertheless was brought about in a way no less effectual; that is, they were taken to Him. In either case it was true that the Lord was nigh at hand. For although eighteen hundred years have passed, and the Lord has not yet come,—and although many years may yet pass before the day of His glorious advent,—yet the time between His ascension and that of His second coming, when compared with eternity, is so short, that either at the beginning or end of that short time it may well be said, "the time of our Lord's coming is at hand." "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Since then the time of the Lord's coming is so near, why should we be anxious about the concerns of this world? Let us, as the apostle says in verse 6, "*be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made*

known unto God." Not that we are to become utterly careless of our worldly affairs. This would be quite at variance with the directions of St. Paul elsewhere given. But the meaning is, that after we have done *our* part to procure for ourselves and those dependent on us all necessary worldly comforts, we are not to perplex our hearts with anxious care, but leave the result in the hands of God. This is clear from the injunction to prayer which follows.

It will be well for us, brethren, to cultivate this habit of entire reliance on the protection of our heavenly Father. Think ye, He is regardless of our interests? Hath He not given His Son to die for us? Hath He not sent His Spirit to renew our hearts? And will He, after all, desert us, as if we did not belong to Him? "Doubtless He is our Father, though Abraham acknowledge us not."

As God is a bountiful and tender Father, so is He well pleased when His children call upon Him in prayer. He is glorified by their acknowledgement of dependence upon Him. Every thing we enjoy comes from Him. He supplies every want. He giveth every needful grace. He is the overflowing fountain, from which the thirsty soul is satisfied. He is the rich banquet, at which the hungry soul is refreshed. He has no desire to straiten us of happiness; and He takes pleasure in seeing us approaching nearer and nearer to Himself. These are the considerations which should move us to be constant in our addresses at His gracious throne.

Observe, brethren, the apostle recommends us to join *thanksgiving* with *supplication*. When we approach the divine throne with our petitions, we are to come

with a thankful heart. We must not carry before God a discontented spirit. However few our blessings, in comparison with what we may observe others enjoying, let us ever remember they are far greater than we deserve. For at God's hand, inasmuch as we have sinned against Him, we merit nothing but punishment. Being then thankful for the measure of good with which God hath been pleased hitherto to favour us, when we pray to Him for an increase, let our prayer be made with humility and resignation. If it please Him to lessen our trials, and increase our blessings, then let our thanksgivings and songs of praise abound in proportion.

Thus, casting all our care upon God, and being filled with thankfulness for the mercies we enjoy, may we not expect to obtain the blessing which the apostle promises in the 7th verse, that *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus?* This *peace* no man can understand but he that experiences it. It is one of the things of the Spirit; therefore none but the spiritual man understands it. Enjoying this peace, in consequence of freeing our minds from all anxiety, and commending ourselves with prayerful confidence to our God, our hearts and minds will be kept uninjured and safe from all harm through the protecting care of the Captain of our salvation, Christ Jesus; unto whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever! *Amen.*

LECTURE XVII.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 8, 9.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do : and the God of peace shall be with you.

THIS 8th verse is so rich in matter of reflection, that it might be taken as the heads of a lecture on Christian ethics. Whosoever will be a perfect Christian, cannot take a better way of becoming such than to adopt as the rule of his conduct this very clear and comprehensive text. As the practical advice given in the preceding part of this chapter relates to a Christian's duty to his God, so that here given all relates to a Christian's intercourse with his fellow-men.

We cannot but admire the extent of good conduct enjoined in Scripture on the Christian. It is not possible for any one to be approved by God for his *piety*, who is not also careful of his *morality*. Let a man be

never so devout and regular in his prayers, if he neglect his duties to his fellow-creatures, he cannot expect that God will acknowledge him as a faithful servant. You remember how our Lord speaks on this subject—
“Go and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” That is, your sacrifices offered on God’s altar will not be accepted, if you are unnatural and unmerciful to your fellow-men.” Again, our Lord saith, *“When thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift, go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”*

Thus it is manifest, that if we desire to have all our behaviour consistent with our profession as Christians, we must consider what is binding on us not only in our relation to God, but also in our relation to one another. It is very unaccountable that preachers are sometimes found fault with, as chargeable with a deficiency in soundness of evangelical doctrine, because they venture to touch on moral duty in the pulpit. Just as if the truth of the Gospel could be disparaged or obscured by drawing attention to the holy life which it requires and produces in all who truly embrace it. It may safely be asserted, that no preacher can do wrong who takes St. Paul for his guide in the manner of discharging his official duties. See then how very fully he enters upon moral duty in our text : and it may be remarked, on the strength of what we read in verse 9, that he is here briefly recapitulating the topics on which he dwelt at large when personally present in the church at Philippi.

Let us now go on to notice in their order the various good things which St. Paul commends to our attention.

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The first of these good things is the *true*. Here we see that a Christian ought to be distinguished by his love of truth. The ninth commandment forbids the giving false evidence in a court of justice against a neighbour. But we must extend the spirit of this Divine law a little farther, and view it as forbidding a departure from truth on any occasion whatever. We are commanded to be followers of God as His dear children, to be perfect as He is perfect, to be renewed daily after His image. Now what is the character of God in regard to truth? Is He not ever unchangeable and always faithful? It would be entirely contrary to His nature—nay even beyond His power—to represent any thing in any other light than its true light. This then is the example for us. We are under an obligation to tell the truth, and never utter that which is false, whatever may be the consequences of so doing. Now this rule will apply not merely in grave matters of business, where no honourable man would think of violating it, but also in the most minute and the most trifling matters of common life. A Christian ought to acquire and preserve to himself the reputation of perfect truthfulness, so that every one might place in him the most entire confidence. Let his lips be ever unpolluted with falsehood; let him be as much afraid of uttering it as he would be to take into his hands hot burning coals; and all men will learn to trust him, as much as they would trust their own eyes. We may conceive what a happy state of society it would be, if this love for the things that are *true* were more generally entertained than we now find it to be. How pleasing would it be, could we always receive the words of others without distrust; and

have the satisfaction of knowing that our own words were relied on without suspicion. I am well aware that we are often placed in circumstances wherein our love of truth is put to a severe trial. Sometimes we must either tell the truth, or endanger the good name of a friend or relative ; sometimes our love of *truth* will require us to endanger the losing of our own reputation as good-tempered and agreeable neighbours ; at other times by telling truth our worldly prospects might be placed in jeopardy. Now in all these cases, however hard the alternative may appear, we ought not to hesitate a moment in preferring truth to falsehood. We may safely leave to God the result of our following His express laws. There does not seem any fanaticism in expecting that He will in His own way make up to us whatever we may lose by conscientious obedience to His will. While we thus urge the love and practice of telling truth on all occasions, at whatever risk, we think it right to observe, that it is the duty of all to abstain from bringing any one into the trying position that we have mentioned. While some might be able to resist the temptation, there would be others who would probably fall under it. In this latter case, it would be difficult to clear ourselves of part of the blame of his sin. No one should therefore be urged or even prompted to tell us any thing more on any subject than he is himself disposed to communicate. Ever then let us be on our guard to speak nothing but what is true ourselves, and do what we can to promote the exercise of the same virtue in others ; and thus shall we approve ourselves to be the children of "*God, that cannot lie.*"

The apostle next commends to our attention the things that are *honest*. Here we must observe, that the word *honest* must have had a different meaning in the days when our English Bible was translated from what it has now ; for the original word which this is made to represent has no reference to what we call *honesty*. It refers to *gravity* or *dignity* of deportment. The object of the apostle here is to exhort us to conduct ourselves so that all may *respect* us, and hold us in *honour*. In order to do this, we must avoid all levity and frivolity of behaviour. This will require us also to abstain from indulging in what is ridiculous, either in conversation or action. It is very unbecoming in one, whose anticipations are so noble as the Christian's are, to make himself the subject of mirth or laughter, by doing any thing undignified. If we only bear in mind, that the eye of our Master whom we serve is on us at all times, we shall be led to act and speak always in such a manner as both to approve ourselves to Him, and to make ourselves respected amongst men. Let it be said of the Christian—'There is a man, who, even in his happiest hours, never forgets that he has to die, and stand at the judgment-seat of Christ.'

We are next exhorted to think on the things that are *just*. This advice is no doubt most suitable to persons engaged in trade and commerce, who are so often under the temptation to overreach and take advantage of their neighbours. But it is not exclusively applicable to them. We have all numerous opportunities of acting up to it ; and we are all liable to the bias of acting unjustly. It is natural to us to be more intent on our own interests than we are on consulting for another's

good. Now if we deprive another of what is due to him, in order to secure our own convenience, we neglect the injunction in our text. A conscientious observance of this apostolic rule will require us to pay every man what is due to him, whether money, or respect, or obedience. It will also require us to make a due return of gratitude or kindness to those who have at any time done good to us, and never to let the interest of any one suffer by calumny or misrepresenting facts, when we have it in our power to help by our testimony. What a happy world would it be, if all men were thus the jealous guardians of each other's welfare! There will indeed be no reason to expect to see this state of things ever realized, so long as the greater part of men are uninfluenced by the spirit of the religion which they profess; but it will be no small blessing to a community, if all the sincere Christians living in it be thus careful to think of and to follow the *things that are just*.

We come next to the things that are *pure*. This is a very comprehensive piece of advice. As there are many things that may defile us, so there are many instances in which we may study to be pure. We may exercise purity in seeking to be clear of hypocrisy and duplicity in our intercourse with one another. We may exercise it in doing every action we perform, having reference to others, from uncorrupt and disinterested motives. We may exercise it in preserving our thoughts and conversation from unchastity. We may exercise it in avoiding profane and irreverent language. In proportion as we find it difficult to remain undefiled in the midst of a polluted world, we ought to exercise the greater dili-

gence and watchfulness. This advice of St. Paul cannot be followed without very great effort on our part. It is easy to cleanse the body from its defilement, but very difficult to cleanse the soul; and unless the soul be purified by the influence of the Holy Spirit, we need not expect to be able to live undefiled among men. We ought not to think any labour misapplied which is laid out on the acquisition of this purity; for this is a quality by which the redeemed in heaven are all distinguished. They are all enrobed in the white garment of holiness; and no one who is impure can look for an admittance into that blessed company. The Saviour, whom we adore, "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth:" if we then would be like Him, we must follow after the *things that are pure*.

Again, we are entreated to follow *whatsoever things are lovely*. One may be true, grave, just, and pure, and yet be an imperfect specimen of what Christianity can *effect* in men. To all these solid arguments, something more engaging must be added. One must strive to be amiable in his demeanour. Learn here how false is the impression on some people's minds, that religion is calculated to make its professors repulsive. But learn also from the position assigned to this among the other virtues in our text, that it is not the wish of the inspired apostle that we should render ourselves amiable at the expense of other good qualities. If this advice had been placed before the others, there might have been a danger of men considering that their main object was to render themselves agreeable to one another. But the apostle, by postponing the *lovely*, or amiable, to what is *just* and *pure*, teaches us to seek to

be amiable no farther than we can be so with a good conscience. Thus, we are not to confound loveliness with a culpable facility of temper.

But perhaps it does not require much reasoning to convince us of the propriety of not being too good-tempered. The most prevalent fault among Christians is in the opposite direction. We are all too uncompromising. We are all too unwilling to accommodate ourselves to the views and feelings of other men. I put it to you all, brethren, whether we ought not to be very careful not to give pain to one another by any hard speeches, or unreasonable doings. If every man examined the record of his past life, how many instances of delinquency would he discover under this head? How many uncharitable words would witness against him! How many harsh dealings with his fellow-men would fill him with bitter regret! We should be grieved at the remembrance of having given a wrathful answer to a reasonable request, and of having often lost the good will of men, whom we might have gained by using patience instead of austerity. How much happier might we all have been, if we had never rendered ourselves repulsive to any one by such behaviour as is contrary to the spirit of our religion!

We sometimes hear good-breeding mentioned as something distinct from Christian conduct: but when we duly weigh the writings of the apostles, we find it is wrong to make this distinction. True politeness was never learned without Christianity, and there is no consistent Christian who is not also polite, in the proper sense of that word. By *politeness* I understand ability to render one's self agreeable and helpful to all around

him. Now this is the very thing that true religion enjoins. It provides for diminishing the evils of the world by requiring of all its professors the constant exercise of a meek and forgiving spirit, "if any man have a quarrel against any." "Forbear one another, and forgive one another: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." The God, whose we are and whom we serve, hath chosen to be known as a God of Love. Be it therefore our desire to resemble Him in suffering love to rule and guide our conduct in the world. As much as in us lies, let us be agreeable and pleasing to all. Let us do our endeavour to secure the affections of men, by increasing their comforts, and diminishing their trials and vexations. If we have the opportunity, let us con-
dole with them in their sorrows, and rejoice with them in their prosperity. All this we may do without any trouble to ourselves—nay with great advantage to our own happiness. For if we have experienced the mercy of God in the salvation of our own souls, nothing will give us more exquisite pleasure than the exercising a merciful spirit to other men.

Would it be wrong to urge the duty of making ourselves amiable from worldly considerations? If not, then consider how much more likely a man is to succeed in his pursuits, if he behaves with courtesy and kindness to all around him, than he who renders himself obnoxious and repulsive by asperity of temper and sternness of look? While the latter may die friendless and in want, the former shall enjoy plenty while he lives, and be followed to his grave by the many who loved him in life, and will ever revere his memory. Who is the more likely to receive help in a time of

need, the amiable or the stern? Truly men will flee from the latter, and leave him to his fate; while they will count it a privilege to lend their aid to rescue the former from his difficulties.

But I will not press this duty from mere worldly considerations. The Christian ought to remember, that while on earth he has a very important office to perform. He has to do what he can towards increasing the subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom. He has to assist in destroying the works of Satan. He has to aid in drawing men from the practice of sin to the exercise of all the good works of faith. This Christian is thy duty. Is it not then of great importance to be careful that you do not raise a prejudice against the cause which it is your duty to recommend? If you, who are known as a disciple of Christ, make yourself hated because of a hasty temper, or severe manner of treating other men, is it not clear that you thereby lose the influence, which you might otherwise possess, of gaining souls from Satan to Christ the Lord? And oh! what an inconsistent object you will appear! A Christian that hinders Christ's cause and work! Are we not then, brethren, under a sacred obligation to strive to be amiable in our deportment? What will our prayer signify, when we say, *Thy kingdom come*, if we obstruct the progress of that kingdom by our misconduct? As we believe and teach that *God is Love*, let us show those who are yet strangers to God, what a lovely effect our faith has upon us. It may be they will thus be attracted by the amiable sight which will be exhibited to them. Let all our attempts at benevolent actions among men be recommended by amiable deportment in

ourselves, and then we may expect that God will follow them with His rich blessing.

Another consideration, which ought to render us attentive to this duty, is, that we shall thereby be more approved by our Father in heaven. He must be delighted by beholding in His children the delineation of His own features. He must be pleased by seeing in us some of that radiant quality by which He is rendered glorious, and by which He illumines the very courts of heaven. It must give Him glory to see coming to maturity in us the heavenly seed which He implanted in our souls, when He made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. Again, it becomes us to strive to be amiable, because by so doing we best consult our own happiness. No man can be happy who is conscious of having acted so as to procure to himself many enemies. So, every Christian must have a high degree of satisfaction in his own mind, if he can reflect on numerous instances in which he has been enabled to exercise the graces of meekness and charity. As anger in the soul is always accompanied with unhappiness, so placidity of temper will be the certain harbinger of calm delight. If we wish to sail smoothly on a peaceful sea, we must take care not to agitate it by the storms of passion. If we desire to enjoy the pure air of contentment with the station we occupy in life, we must not pollute it by causing every one around us to exhale the poison of malice and ill-will. O let us be careful to put far away from us every evil disposition, that would be likely to make us less happy than it is the will of God we should be! Let us think no effort too hard to gain the character and reputation of being *lovely*. Whatever we

have in times past done contrary to this character, let us now do what we can to counteract it. Let what remains of our life be spent in acquiring to ourselves the satisfaction which hitherto we have missed by the neglect of this good quality. Let our light of love shine like the sun, that men may be drawn towards us, as the green plants are attracted towards that bright luminary; and when men are forced to praise us for our loveliness, we shall have the satisfaction of transferring their praise, as an offering most due, to the altar of Him, who by His grace and Holy Spirit worketh all our good works in us.

The apostle, after the things that are *lovely*, recommends those that are of *good report*. It is of great benefit to a Christian, to be held in good esteem by his fellow-men. This we have already touched upon. In order to maintain a good reputation, it is not enough that the Christian does what is actually right. He must never *seem* to do what is wrong. He must be careful to avoid all suspicion of acting in a manner unbecoming his holy profession. It is not sufficient that he abstain from the use of harsh and severe words: he must not even be seen with a frowning look. It is not enough that he is really temperate: he must never be seen in the company of the drunkard. It is not enough that he is reverent in his treatment of sacred things: he must never be seen in the seat of the scornful. O how careful should every Christian be, lest he ever give cause to blaspheme that holy name by which he is called! How fearful should he be, lest he make ungodly men think that there is no difference between his state and their own!

It is not to be expected that every good man will preserve a *good report*, even when he has done his part to maintain it. Slander and calumny are ever, alas! too busy at their satanic work. Even the Son of God Himself did not escape the malice of them that delight to make others appear as bad as themselves. One is not to blame, when he incurs evil report in this way. Nay he is rather to rejoice when he suffers reproach for well-doing. And when it happens to any one to have his good deeds overlooked, or attributed to unworthy motives, he may console himself with the reflection, that *he has a witness in heaven, and a record on high.*

Last of all, the apostle commends to us whatever is *virtuous and praiseworthy*. Lest the things mentioned before might not include all that was necessary to a perfect Christian, he adds the general and comprehensive terms *virtue and praise*. Virtue is that assemblage of good qualities which go to form the character of a person whom we esteem, or on whom we bestow *praise*. "Whatever then," says the apostle, "may be omitted in my exhortation to you, I desire you to supply it yourselves; and in making this addition, let your minds be guided by the excellence of its tendency, and its capability of procuring esteem among those who are the best judges of what is right."

We have now, brethren, gone over briefly these eight things, which it is so necessary for the Christian to attend to. The apostle desires us to "think on these things." The duties we have mentioned, and the good qualities we have spoken of, are indeed of a very high order; so high indeed, that it is to be feared very few of us have as yet reached them. But we must not be con-

tented until we have used all our efforts to become the persons which St. Paul would have all Christians to be. We may be encouraged to persevere in following up the duties which he have learned and received from St. Paul, by the promise with which he concludes his exhortation, that “ *the God of peace shall be with us.*”

LECTURE XVIII.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 10—23.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again ; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want : for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound : I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-

pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

WE cannot read this without being struck with the peculiarity of the expression—"I rejoiced in the Lord, that your care of me hath flourished." The words to *rejoice in the Lord*, standing by themselves, occur twice before in this epistle, and there the meaning obviously requires to be taken as equivalent to "being happy in the enjoyment of Christian privileges," or "being delighted at the thought of our union with Christ the Lord." But here, when something else is joined to the words, we must attach a different meaning to them.

It would not seem foreign to the object of the apostle in this verse, to take the expression as meaning, that he *was filled with a joyful gratitude to the Lord*, for the care which he had produced towards him in the hearts of the Philippians. Every event which befel the apostle made him turn his mind to the Lord, in whose service he delighted to employ himself. If happiness was appointed to him, he rejoiced with gratitude; and if trials were his lot, he viewed them as the means divinely appointed for securing a blessed state to him in the world of glory.

When a fresh instance of love for him is exhibited by his children in the faith at Philippi, he thinks with

delight and grateful feelings of the advantage of being in the Lord, and of being associated in this union with Christ with those who were so mindful of him. He could not fail to be delighted by the strong proof afforded of genuine brotherly love. It was the high occupation of his life to recommend to the world the religion of the Blessed Jesus. Must he not then have been greatly delighted, when he saw the happy effects of that religion? The Philippians, as to temporal matters, were incapable of being benefitted by the apostle. Nay, while he was absent from them, making known the gospel, or suffering in the cause of it, in other places, they were even in a spiritual sense nearly independent of his assistance. How disinterested, then, their attention to his wants! What could have made them thus disinterested? It was their great love for the man who had been the instrument of their conversion to God, and also the anxious desire that many others should, through his means, be turned to the faith, that made them so careful in attending to the wants of the apostle. Who can refrain from admiring with the apostle the strong affection that binds together the hearts of those who have trusted for salvation in the same Saviour! What religion but Christ's could ever produce such disinterested kindness of feeling as this!

Observe the beautiful figure used by St. Paul,—“*Your care of me hath flourished again.*” He regards their charitable assistance to himself as a *fruit* of their faith in Christ. This faith is something that does not lie hid, but shows itself by the blossoms which it puts forth, and by the useful fruit which springs from it. And this Christian faith is a tree which brings forth

constantly—not one year productive, and always after that barren ; it is like a tree planted by the river side, which yieldeth its fruit in due season. In this expression an allusion is clearly made to the fact, afterwards stated, of the Philippians having repeatedly before this ministered to the wants of St. Paul.

While St. Paul rejoiced in the Lord, and was thankful for the renewed care of the Philippians, he is particularly guarded in his language, lest we should suppose that his joyful gratitude arose from selfish considerations. He says, v. 11, “ *Not that I speak in respect of want ; for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.*” Thus fortified was his mind against all the possible evils of a temporal nature incident to the arduous life which he led after his conversion. So that now, when he is so much affected by the friendly gifts of the Philippians, we may believe that he is more delighted at the manifest proof of the sincerity of their faith, than he is at the supply of his own wants.

He was perfectly disciplined in the school of faith. He had passed through many changes since he became an apostle. He knew what it was to be abased with scarcity, and to be exalted with abundance. “Everywhere and in all things he was instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” A man thus exercised was not likely to be easily affected either in a season of plenty, or at a time of destitution. To him the variations of earthly comfort were of ordinary occurrence. He had learned to look upon temporal good things in their proper light. He had been taught to view them as the gifts of God, to be conferred in the measure which He deemed the

most suitable. He knew that God will take care of His servants, so as to have their wants supplied, while He has work for them to accomplish on earth. In this state of mind St. Paul was ever quite prepared and unencumbered for the most hazardous undertakings in the cause of Christ's gospel. He was like a soldier that confides in his commander. He relied on Christ not merely for the success of his warfare; he was sure not merely of the victory; but he knew that his commander would give him needful provision, while engaged in the toil of the expedition.

How was it that the apostle was thus so well-fitted for his high and arduous office? He himself tells us, in v. 13,—“*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” Thus, he does not arrogate to himself the honour of having become so expert at exercising the Christian grace of contentment. He is careful to ascribe the glory to Him by whose Spirit it is that we are enabled to do any truly good work, or exercise such dispositions as are not only acceptable to God, but deemed amiable by man.

Brethren, it may never happen to us to be so much exposed to the influence of change in our worldly lot as St. Paul was; and thus we may not have occasion to exercise, so much as he did, the grace of contentment. Yet, we must sometimes be called to this exercise. Crosses and disappointments to a greater or less degree happen to all. No man finds things in the world exactly as he would like them. Some, who never knew what poverty was, have been severely tried by family afflictions. Others, who have been pretty free from these, have been called to mourn over undutiful

sons and daughters, who, as they have grown up, have frustrated all the hopes of the benefit which was expected from a Christian education, watched over with conscientious affection. Some, again, have found grief in the world, by trusting to friends who have cruelly deceived them. Others have often been pained by having their good deeds viewed with a malicious eye, and attributed to motives which it has ever been their desire to exclude from the spring of their actions. Indeed, it would be endless to enumerate all the evils to which different Christians are subject. In what spirit does it become us to meet these evils? Shall we wonder and complain that we, who commit ourselves to the care of Divine Providence, are so made the sport of adversity? Shall we perplex ourselves with the difficulty of our position, as if some strange thing happened to us? This would be very wrong. For we should then be acting as if we had either forgotten, or else never yet had learned, what kind of a life is appointed for the Christian while he is in this world. *We now live by faith, not by sight.* We cannot comprehend the reason of the events that now happen to us. We see neither the beginning nor the end, the cause nor the object of those events. In the state of glory to which we look forward, we shall be able to appreciate the wisdom and the love of Him who now conducts us, though at present our way be often through thorns and briers, through the sands and rocks of a waste howling wilderness.

This assurance, that we are under the ever-watchful care of our Heavenly Shepherd, and that no adversity can happen to us without His permission, cannot fail to render us as contented as St. Paul was in all the

changes of his condition. It must be, doubtless, well-pleasing to God, to behold us entirely resigned to His will,—not merely acknowledging with our lips that all His ways are right, but feeling happy in our souls in being disposed of by Him towards the enduring of adversity with patience. If we are happy only when we enjoy prosperity, what shows the superiority of our state to that of men who have no faith in Christ? Herein consists the excellence of our religion, that we can be made happy by it, even at the time when otherwise we should be very miserable. As faithful Christians, we can look through the darkness of the surrounding black clouds which hang over us during the storms of this life, and behold in the distance the gleam of bright sunshine which is to usher in the never-ending peaceful calm of the future. And when we think that this darkness has not been sent upon us without a good reason, we patiently and contentedly wait for the season of light.

Let our hearts be disposed like the apostle's, in the time of his trials. The strength which qualified him for meeting boldly all his adversity will not, in the time of our need, be denied to us. Christ our Saviour has help for every one of His people. He cares for them, and is ready to assist them, in every case of difficulty in which they can be placed. Though He be at the right hand of God out of sight—we are not beyond His reach: and He is not beyond the reach of our cry. He is pleased when we depend upon Him. He wishes us to go often to His mercy-seat. He desires that we keep up unceasing intercourse with Himself; and

therefore it is, no doubt, that he often brings us into circumstances in which we cannot do without His help.

Be far from us then all murmuring and complaining at the adverse lot which may happen to us ! Whatever unbelief may dictate, we may be sure that that adversity is a token of the love, and not a proof of the anger of God. "*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*" Be far from us also all discontent at the position which God hath appointed us to occupy in life ! Never let us envy those, who have been born to greater riches and higher station than ourselves. Neither wealth nor rank is in itself a certain good. The wealthy and the great have their trials, as well as the poor and the humble. True happiness dwells only in the soul of that Christian who has learned the exercise of the grace of contentment, no matter whether he inhabits a palace or a cottage.

I would not be understood as here supposing that it is the duty of one born in, or reduced to, a humble state so to be contented with it, as to make no effort to improve it. This would be encouraging sloth and a meanness of spirit, as foreign to the true nature of Christian contentment as any thing could well be. It is the Christian's duty to be diligent and active in his worldly pursuits, in order to provide for himself and those of his own house, and also in order that he may have something to impart to him that needeth. It is also his duty to acquire influence in the world, if he can do this with a good conscience, in order that he may wield this influence in the Christian cause. Thus active and diligent would we have the Christian to be. But surely he may well exercise this activity and diligence without

injury to the grace of contentment with his lot. When however this activity and diligence are not attended with success, we must neither complain nor grow dispirited ; but surrender ourselves with meek resignation to the disappointment which God hath permitted to happen to us.

But, although St. Paul was so well instructed in the proper way of receiving the advances of either poverty or abundance, this was not to be a reason for his friends to neglect him. He says, *v. 14, "Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction."* It may be the will of God to subject His people to trials ; but it would be an unjustifiable cruelty that would lead one Christian to neglect another, on the plea that it is well to exercise contentment. Trials will come upon us all, heavy and frequent enough, without our contributing to them by our want of kindness to each other. And it requires all the sympathy which one Christian can show towards another, to enable us to bear the measure of sorrow appointed for us on earth.

If there be such a thing existing as a professing Christian who is more taken up in admiring the contented spirit of a poor neighbour, than he is ready to bestow of his abundance to alleviate the burden of such an one's poverty,—let him be assured his sentiment is not the offspring of genuine Christianity. Though it be edifying to behold the exercise of contentment, it is more pleasant to a truly benevolent man to witness the exhibition of devout gratitude to the Author of all mercy, and the Mover of all true compassion in the hearts of men.

In like manner, we admire the faithful missionary or pastor who labours for the conversion and instruction

of sinners, though he has barely at his command the means of a humble subsistence ; but we cannot think much of the Christian character of his wealthier brethren, who suffer him, so faithful a servant of their Lord, to want, when they have the power of helping him. Meek and contented with his lot as he may be, they are not hereby exonerated from the incumbent duty of making a suitable provision for him. The apostle in the text tells us that the Philippians did well in sympathizing with him in his necessity. Now observe the extent of the principles herein implied. The apostle was not their pastor—in this case he would have had a positive claim upon them, by the law that the labourer must have his reward. But he was the missionary, who, immediately after their conversion, had left their city, to preach the gospel in other lands. Would we, then, come in for a share of the commendation which the apostle bestows upon the Philippians, we must be ready to send our help, when it is wanted, to supply the necessity of Christ's servants who have gone to distant lands, to make known His blessed gospel. This is the warrant for the Church calling upon her children to united efforts to support the work of the missionary in foreign countries. It is the duty of all of us readily to respond to this call. If Christ's gospel is to be successful, shall we manifest no interest in its success? If a victory is to be achieved, shall we be regardless of sharing in the glory of the triumph?

The apostle goes on, in verses 15 and 16, to recall certain facts in his personal history, which greatly redound to the honour of the Philippians. When he departed from Macedonia, of which Philippi was the

chief city, no Church exhibited any friendly sympathy with his pecuniary wants except the Philippians. Even while he was at Thessalonica, also a city of Macedonia, where his preaching was so successful in gaining converts to the faith, the Philippians sent to him once and again. And, as we elsewhere learn, (2 Cor. ii. 8, 9) after he had been so successful as to found a Church in Corinth, which was the richest city in Greece, he had still to be under obligations to the devoted Church in Philippi. While at Corinth, the apostle was so reduced, that, to the everlasting shame of the Church there, he was compelled to work with his own hands as a tent-maker. How welcome then at such a time the assistance from Philippi !

In recalling these circumstances, the apostle is not concerned about the supply of his own wants. His mind is fixed rather on the happiness of witnessing faith tested by its effects. He rejoiced to see the "fruit abounding to the account" of his converts. From this expression we may learn, that a reward awaits those who are mindful of the wants of Christ's faithful servants. God will deal bountifully with those who are bountiful in His cause. He will repay with tenfold increase the talents which we lay out in the accomplishment of His will. This return to us may not be made in the present world ; but it will be assuredly made at the time when God shall render to every man according to his works. The Saviour saith, (Matt. x. 41) "He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward ; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to

drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

According to the principle laid down in these words of our Blessed Saviour, the Philippians might expect that they would throughout eternity have a share in the glory which would be conferred on St. Paul. If it fell to him, who turned many to righteousness, to shine as the stars for ever, they would ever occupy beside him a conspicuous place: for they had received him as a faithful prophet of the Lord, and, by assisting him, contributed to the success of that glorious work to which he had devoted his life.

In verse 18, St. Paul gives utterance to his grateful feelings for the most recent instance of the liberality of his friends. When he was far away from them, and a prisoner in Rome, they despatched their most trustworthy brother Epaphroditus as the bearer of their alms, and no doubt also of their affectionate inquiries as to the condition of this beloved prisoner of Jesus Christ. This token of their love the apostle calls "*an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.*" These are the offerings which, under the New Testament dispensation, are fit to be made at the altar of God. If we desire, from a powerful feeling of gratitude for mercies received, to make an acknowledgment by offering a sacrifice, we may be sure of rendering one which shall be accepted, when we give of our substance to supply the wants of Christ's servants who are diligently engaged in seeking to extend His kingdom in the world.

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The apostle felt his inability to compensate, by any worldly advantage, the kindness of his friends; but he could fill their minds with comfort, by the promise of something better than earth produces. He could direct their minds to rely upon the God whom he served, and to trust that He would "supply all their need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." However much they might impoverish themselves by attending to the wants of the imprisoned apostle, who was so dear to them, they need not fear that they should be permitted to suffer any want; for the God, whose servant they succoured, had abundant riches treasured up in Christ Jesus. He would abundantly repay them for the kindness which the apostle himself could not repay. Thus might the apostle, in his humility, speak of his own inability to make a suitable return to his kind friends: but no doubt they all felt and believed that he, by his preaching Christ to them, had enriched them with such treasures as cannot be equalled by the most precious gifts of earth.

Having his heart full of admiration of the riches and glory which Christians look for in Christ Jesus, he exclaims, "*Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*" This ascription of praise was dictated by an overflowing heart. Here we may learn in what spirit we should receive favours at the hand of God. As contentment is our duty when in adversity, so it becomes us to lift up our hearts in gratitude in the day of prosperity. It may be that this ascription was made by the apostle, as well because he had come to the end of his epistle, as from reflecting on the Lord's mercies bestowed upon him through his believing

people. In the former case it should be a lesson for us, to take care that all our serious works should be begun and ended in God, and that we should ever be mindful of giving Him glory in every thing that we set our hands to. How truly has St. Paul throughout this epistle written to the glory of God! How has he glorified God by the purity of his doctrine, and by the fervour of his pious and suitable exhortations! And how much has he glorified God in exhibiting so pointedly the happy state of mind which the belief of Christ's gospel produces!

The apostle however does not end his epistle without a friendly message, saying—“*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you; chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.*” Here we may see how the primitive Christians kept up an affectionate intercourse with one another, however far separated. If it is required of Christians that they love one another, there must be some way of testifying their love: and while it is their duty chiefly to show it forth by deeds of kindness, such as helping one another in seasons of adversity, they are at the same time to show it forth by the agreeable interchange of the assurances of love and esteem. Thus it is that Christianity requires the perpetuity of that friendly intercourse, which is highly calculated to make social life a blessing.

Having now, brethren, finished a somewhat long course of Lectures on this most interesting epistle, in which I have endeavoured to explain what was difficult, and suggest what was profitable,—I end with the words

of the Apostle here, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*" May His favour be ever manifested to you ! May His presence comfort you in every adversity ; and may His smile add brightness to your season of prosperity ! All your life on earth may you rejoice in the assurance of His mercy and love ; and all eternity in heaven may you bask in the beams of His glory !

THE END.

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